



Dear Readers,

As part of our continuing effort to further expand the bilateral relations with Norway as one of our key partners in various fields, my colleagues and me at the Embassy are pleased to inform of the important start of academic cooperation between Kabul University and Oslo Metropolitan University. I thank my good friend and colleague Dr. Curt Rice, Rector of OsloMet University, for his personal commitment in jointly ensuring, that the initial idea of this cooperation between the two institutions would come to fruition. On the same note, I am also grateful to the esteemed Chancellor of Kabul University, Honorable Prof. Osman Babury, for his dedicated efforts in this initiative. This partnership is based on mutual commitment for result-oriented collaboration, including joint objectives for program- and initiative implementation, ranging from academic fellowships and joint research programs to online and in-person teaching sessions for students. The collaboration covers the fields of international studies, social and health sciences, technology, design and art, and in a broader context, will be another important measure in the government's efforts to empower Afghanistan's committed and most talented youth as the ultimate guarantors of the country's future. Achieving a lasting peace in Afghanistan will have a profound impact in consolidating the many social, economic, political and other gains of the past two decades, and will enable all of our citizens, but especially our dynamic youth, to realize and achieve their full potential. To this end, we appreciate the renewed and joint call of our international partners for an immediate ceasefire and an end to all terrorist attacks. We also look forward to the up-coming NATO ministerial meeting and other occasions, to further strengthen international consensus and support for a peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan and an outcome to the peace efforts that meets the demands and aspirations of our people.

Youssof Ghafoorzai
Ambassador

Ambassador Ghafoorzai Signs MoU Between Oslo Metropolitan and Kabul Universities on Cooperation



The Embassy of Afghanistan in Oslo facilitated the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Kabul University and Oslo Metropolitan University, to mark the beginning of a long-term partnership between the two universities. The ceremony was attended by the two respective heads of Universities, Chancellor Babury of Kabul University and Rector Rice of Oslo Metropolitan University, together with the heads of various departments of their institutions, as well as Ambassador Ghafoorzai as facilitator of the meeting and Norwegian Ambassador to Afghanistan, Ole Andreas Lindeman.

In his opening remarks, Ambassador Ghafoorzai highlighted the importance of the event in formalizing the start of long-term partnership and collaboration between the two



Universities. As the second speaker at the event Ambassador Lindeman welcomed the signing of the MOU as "a great bilateral agreement" and that the Norwegian Embassy in Kabul would do whatever they can, to assist the two Universities' partnership. Rector Rice, expressed his gratitude with his remarks and announced the creation of a "OsloMet-Kabul

University Mobility Grant", initially funded by OsloMet University, to enable academic exchange. Chancellor Babury conveyed his congratulations and appreciation for the partnership with OsloMet University, and the facilitating and assisting role of Ambassador Ghafoorzai and Ambassador Lindeman in the initiative. He underscored the importance of the MoU, which will help investing in human capital, Afghanistan's peaceful future, and enable Kabul University to achieve its goal of becoming a modern and leading university.



Ambassador Ghafoorzai, on behalf of Chancellor Babury, and Rector Rice, on behalf of OsloMet University, signed the MoU between Kabul University and OsloMet University. In closing, Ambassador Ghafoorzai thanked everyone for participating in the event, which signified their commitment to this partnership and to making sure that it will be tangible and action-oriented. In that regard, he also reaffirmed his assurance and that of his colleagues at the Embassy, to help ensure the success of the partnership. The MoU covers the academic areas of journalism, international studies, pharmacy, psychology, education, art, management, engineering, and administration.



*Signing Ceremony of Memorandum of Understanding
Between
OsloMet and Kabul Universities*

President Ghani and Prime Minister Solberg Held Phone Discussion on Bilateral Relations



On Friday evening, 22nd of January, President Ashraf Ghani and Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg discussed expansion of bilateral relations and mutual cooperation in various areas, the peace process and up-coming NATO Ministerial meeting this month. President Ashraf Ghani also highlighted, that the bilateral relations and cooperation have been an important factor for the collective gains, which all



-international partners have made in the last two decades in Afghanistan. Prime Minister Erna Solberg also expressed concern over the escalation of violence in the country and both sides underscored the urgent need for a permanent cease-fire as a major demand of the people of Afghanistan and to preserve and safe-guard the foundational gains of the last two decades which have been achieved as a result of the joint sacrifices of Afghanistan and its international partners.



Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with Secretary General of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with Mr. Tore Hattrem, Secretary General of the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Both sides discussed the last phone conversation between President Ghani and Prime Minister Solberg, developments and the second round of negotiations in Doha, Norway's and other international partner's supporting role in the process, and Norway's role and penholder-ship on Afghanistan issues in the UN Security Council.



Ambassador Ghafoorzai highlighted continuing terrorist attacks as a serious concern and obstacle to the peace process, and that changing the status quo in that regard is needed to strengthening confidence building and ensuring the peoples continued support for the process. He underscored, in that regard, strategic messaging by the international community as essential to creating conditions. Secretary General Hattrem reaffirmed Norway's continued support for the process. He also shared the assessment, that an appropriate, conditions-based military presence will remain important within the framework of NATO in the way forward and emphasized the importance of a positive outcome of the peace process that leads to a dignified and lasting peace.

President Ghani visited Herat Province and Met with Women Groups to Discuss Peace Process and Other Issues



President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani met with a number of women during his visit to Herat province. The representatives of women expressed gratitude for the President's support and commitment to upholding women's rights in the peace process and other imperatives impart issues, including a dignified and lasting peace within a democratic and pluralistic Afghanistan. First Vice-President Amerullah Saleh who was also present in the meeting emphasized that the sacrifices and achievements of the past two decades would not be compromised. He highlighted that Afghan women are an independent and strong voice in the country and that their important contributions in society and polity would remain imperative. President Ghani emphasized the importance of Afghan women expanding their networks in a coherent and effective manner.



President Ghani also asserted that women's role in the peace process would remain essential to the success of the process while also reaffirming the government's continued commitment to the security of Herat province.

Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with Mr. Richard H. Riley Chargé d'Affaires at US Embassy in Oslo

On February 2nd 2021, Ambassador Ghafoorzai met virtually with Mr. Richard H. Riley, Chargé d'Affaires at the United States Embassy in Oslo. Ambassador Ghafoorzai and Mr. Riley discussed current developments in the situation in Afghanistan, including the Afghan peace process, the review of the new US administration's Afghanistan policy, and the US-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership, among other issues. Both sides underscored the importance of an end to violence and terrorist attacks, and



-the enforcement of a ceasefire as among key issues to build confidence and move the peace process forward. They also discussed and emphasized the importance of an outcome to the peace process that results in a lasting,



-dignified and just peace and which preserves the social, economic, democratic, and other gains achieved jointly between Afghanistan, the United States, and other international partners. Ambassador Ghafoorzai hailed the long-term strategic partnership between Afghanistan as a strategic asset for the security and stability of both countries and beyond. The two sides agreed to maintain close collaboration and dialogue on issues of mutual interest in the way forward.

Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with Director of the Peace and Reconciliation Department at the Norwegian Foreign Ministry



On January 26th 2021, Ambassador Ghafoorzai met virtually with Lisa Golden, Director of the Peace and Reconciliation Department at the Norwegian Foreign Ministry. Both sides initially discussed the productive phone conversation between President Ghani and Prime Minister Solberg, which took place a week before, and which covered the areas of expanding Afghanistan-Norway bilateral relations, the Afghan-led peace process, and Norway's role in the UNSC on issues related to Afghanistan. Ambassador Ghafoorzai highlighted Norway's important engagement in Afghanistan and the expansion of Afghanistan-Norway bilateral relations and cooperation under the Strategic Partnership Agreement. On the peace process, he noted the important role of international partners in helping to move the peace process forward, towards a successful outcome that meets the people's expectations. An end to terrorist attacks and the enforcement of a ceasefire was needed to build confidence in the process and make progress in the way forward.



This would be essential to ensuring that the second round of talks in Doha would show more tangible progress than the first one. He also emphasized Norway's continued engagement in the process as an important part of the international community's support and engagement in peace efforts. Norway's extensive work and experience in the area of peace and reconciliation is beneficial to current peace efforts in Afghanistan. On her part, Director Lisa Golden reaffirmed Norway's continued engagement and support for the Afghan-led peace process and expressed concern about the high levels of violence. She also emphasized the importance of an international consensus on, and cooperation for the success of the peace process. Norway would also strive to further build international consensus and support through its role as penholder on Afghanistan in the UNSC. Ambassador Ghafoorzai and Director Golden also discussed joint initiatives on the peace process with participation of the diplomatic community in Oslo.

President Ghani and Bill Gates Discuss Fighting Polio



President Ashraf Ghani in a virtual discussion with Bill Gates, Founder of the Microsoft Corporation and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, discussed matters regarding the fight against polio in Afghanistan yesterday evening. Both sides expressed concerns over an increase in polio cases by several folds in Afghanistan in 2020 as the Taliban did not allow vaccinators into the areas under their control and hampered the vaccination drive. They also had multifaceted discussion over the reforms and providing further facilities for better implementation of the polio vaccination process.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Haneef Atmar visited Uzbekistan for the Afghanistan-Uzbekistan-Pakistan Trilateral Meeting

Foreign Minister Mohammad Haneef Atmar paid an official 3-day visit to Uzbekistan from 2nd – 5th of February. He was accompanied by a senior delegation that included Chief of Staff to the President, Mohammad Shakir Kargar and other senior officials. During the visit, he met with various



officials of the Uzbek Government, including Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan to discuss the development of bilateral relations, lasting regional peace, economic cooperation, and Afghanistan's position as a regional connector. Foreign Minister Atmar conveyed the gratitude of President Ghani for the strong support of the people and government of Uzbekistan for the peace process and the preservation of democratic achievements within the framework of the Republic.



During the visit, the trilateral meeting between Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Pakistan was held and a joint agreement was signed on Kabul-Mazar-Peshawar Railway Roadmap, as an important initiative for further enhancing regional connectivity.

Foreign Minister Atmar Visited the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



Jeddah - From 19th to 22nd January, Foreign Minister Atmar visited Saudi Arabia at the invitation of his Saudi counterpart, Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud. After performing the Hajj Umrah and pilgrimage to Medina, Foreign Minister Atmar met with various Saudi Arabian officials, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Commerce, the Secretary-General of the Muslim World League, the President of the Islamic Development Bank, the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Minister of Transport and the Co-Chair of the Saudi-Afghan Joint Cooperation Commission, as well as the Minister of Education, and the Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council.



In these meetings, a number of decisions were made, and agreements were reached. The Foreign Ministers of Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia agreed to increase ongoing bilateral contacts and consultations to realize the vision of the two countries' leaders to further strengthen political relations, economic cooperation, and to contribute to peace and stability in the region.

Kamal Khan Dam Project Completed and Operationalized in Nimroz Province

On February 3rd, the water flow at Kamal Khan Dam in the southwestern province of Nimroz was successfully tested. The dam is built on the Helmand River in Chaharbarak district close to the Iranian border and will help irrigate 174,000 hectares of land in three districts, as well as supply water to the provincial center. The dam will be finished in the next few days. With the completion of the dam, Nimroz will be directly connected to the Iranian port of Chabahar, benefiting the local agriculture and business sector, and adding jobs and opportunities for the people of Nimroz.



Experts said that the Dam will ensure the better management of Helmand River's water and the implementation of the Hirmand water treaty. The process of transferring the turbines and generators from India is also underway. According to the National Water Affairs Regulation Authority, the dam will provide nine megawatts of power, and in the first stage, the storage of 52 million cubic meters of water. The dam is 16 meters high and will irrigate agricultural lands, while also preventing flooding.



The Embassy of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in Oslo
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