

ENNA

European Network of
NGOs in Afghanistan



His Excellency
Mr. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer
NATO Secretary General
NATO Headquarters
Brussels

British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group

The Refugee Council

240–250 Ferndale Road

London SW9 8BB

Direct line: 020 7346 6700

F: 020 7346 6760

E: info@refugeecouncil.org.uk

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

31 March, 2009

Your Excellency,

We, The British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG), The European Network of NGOs in Afghanistan (ENNA) and The Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) are encouraged by prospects of NATO reviewing its Afghanistan mission policies during this April's Summit. We hope that the outcome of these reviews will lead to an increase in the security and protection of civilians caught in the conflict.

In light of the growing vulnerability of the development and humanitarian effort in Afghanistan as a result of deteriorating security, we wish to raise the following concerns with you in advance of the NATO summit in April 2009:

- The perceived association between the military and civilian aid in Afghanistan has led to a number of attacks on development and humanitarian organizations and threats to staff and beneficiaries by anti-government groups. In turn, this has affected the security and sustainability of projects. We recognise that insecurity in Afghanistan arises from multiple factors, including economic criminality and corruption. However, this does not alter our basic concern regarding the security consequences of military involvement in aid. We strongly believe that development and humanitarian assistance is most effective and sustainable when channelled through civilian actors.
- We are alarmed that despite the approval and endorsement of the Guidelines for the Interaction and Co-ordination of Humanitarian Actors and Military Actors in Afghanistan by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan and UN Agencies, the International Security Assistance Force, Forces serving in Operation Enduring Freedom and the National Security Forces of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, key signatories to these guidelines continue to breach their terms.
- We are concerned that the geographic distribution of humanitarian and development assistance is, in part, influenced by military imperatives over needs-based allocation of aid resources. The disbursement of aid by troop contributing countries has been heavily weighted towards the provinces where their troops are present, while other areas that face equal

humanitarian and development challenges have received less funding. This policy is having a detrimental impact on poor and vulnerable communities in the country.

- We wish to express our grave concern at the growing vulnerability of the development and humanitarian effort in Afghanistan. While we welcome the establishment of an independent UN Office for Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), it is imperative that it is afforded the political and financial support needed to achieve improved planning, coordination and humanitarian access.

With the growing recognition of the importance of humanitarian and development assistance in building the foundations for peace and stability in Afghanistan, we urgently call upon you to consider the following recommendations during the Summit:

1. Ensure a clear separation between civilian and military actors in Afghanistan. In particular, the comprehensive approach adopted by International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which seeks to integrate military, political and other civilian efforts, must be clearly separated from the humanitarian functions of the UN and civil society organizations.
2. All troop contributing countries involved in the NATO led ISAF and the Operation Enduring Freedom operations should respect and implement the Afghanistan National Civil Military Guidelines and abide by the strictest standards of international humanitarian law. All parties to the conflict must respect the basis for humanitarian access negotiated through the humanitarian principles of independence, impartiality and neutrality.
3. Allocation of humanitarian and development aid in Afghanistan should be based on needs rather than political priorities.

Please find enclosed a briefing note 'Aid and Civil Military Relations in Afghanistan'. This Briefing Paper synthesizes research findings on civil-military relations undertaken in Afghanistan in 2008. We would be pleased to meet with you and discuss our recommendations further at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Abdul Basir
The British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group
Email: abdul.basir@refugeecouncil.org.uk
Tel: +44 (0)207 346 6773

Karl Tarring
The European Network of NGOs in Afghanistan
Tel: +44 (0)207 346 1164

Canadian Council for International Co-operation
Tel: + (613) 241-7007



