

(1) EU Signs Assistance...

The two-day summit in Geneva is billed as a platform for the Afghan government to renew its commitment to reform and discuss aid contributions in its bid to achieve stability and security.

Pursuing reform

The United Nations, which is co-hosting the summit at the city's Palais des Nations with the Afghan government, said the conference "will also be crucial in measuring results against the \$15.2bn committed by the international community for Afghanistan in 2016."

Within the package, 311 million euros (roughly \$351m) is allocated to support the Afghan government in pursuing its reform agenda, 80 million euros (roughly \$90m) to improve the health and nutrition of the population, and 15.5 million euros (roughly \$16m) to support the presidential and provincial council elections in 2019.

The EU and the Afghan government also signed a new agreement worth 37 million euros (roughly \$42m) to "reinforce EU assistance to Afghanistan in addressing migration and forced displacement challenges", which brings the total contribution to almost 230 million euros (roughly \$260m).

Earlier on Tuesday, UNICEF's chief of communication in Afghanistan, Alison Parker, warned the situation for children is "dire", with severe acute malnutrition among children being "among the highest globally with about half a million children affected".

"The situation is exacerbated by what has been described as the worst drought in decades with some two million people affected, over half of whom are children," Parker said at the summit in Geneva, adding some "5,000 children have been killed or maimed within the first three quarters of 2018, equal to all of 2017".

Taliban

The conference comes at a time when the US administration is holding direct talks with the Taliban, Afghanistan's largest armed group which was toppled following a US-led invasion in 2001.

The Taliban wants to drive international forces out of the country and establish a legal system based on a strict interpretation of Islamic jurisprudence, a conflict which has claimed thousands of lives in Afghanistan.

According to the latest figures released in July by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), 1,692 civilians were killed during the first six months of 2018 - the most recorded in the period over the last decade since the agency began documentation.

There are now about 14,000 US soldiers in the country as part of the Resolute Support. The Taliban has previously said the presence of foreign troops was the biggest obstacle to peace in Afghanistan. (Aljazeera)

(2) 222 Wolesi...

222 candidates have gotten less than 1,000 votes.

According to the results published on the IEC website, six candidates in Panjshir, 11 in Parwan, 15 in Laghman, 25 in Khost, two in Nimroz, 30 in Farah, 30 in Takhar, 17 in Daikundi, 10 in Bamyan, 19 in Zabul, 21 in Uruzgan, 23 in Kapisa and 15 candidates in Jawzjan provinces have obtained less than 1,000 votes.

In Panjshir, six candidates out of the total 12 got less than 1,000 votes with 86 the lowest number of votes received by a candidate in the province. In Parwan the lowest number of votes obtained by a candidate is 111 and in Laghman 15 candidates got less than 1,000 votes with the lowest number of votes is 34.

In Khost, out of a total 55 candidates, 25 collected less than one thousand votes and the lowest votes by a candidate were four, in Nimroz the lowest number of votes is 80, in Farah 9, in Takhar 145, in Daikundi 48, in Bamyan 56, in Zabul 65, in Uruzgan 105, in Kapesa 14 and in Jawzjan the lowest number of vote received by a candidate is 29.

As earlier mentioned, the highest number of votes obtained by a candidate is 19,768 in Jawzjan province. (Pajhwok)

(3) Afghan President...

will be allowed to join the political process.

The summit is billed as a platform for the Afghan government to renew its commitment to reform and discuss aid contributions in its bid to achieve

stability and security.

The conference comes at a time when the United States administration is holding direct talks with the Taliban, Afghanistan's largest armed group which was toppled following a US-led invasion in 2001.

The Taliban wants pullout of international forces as a pre-condition for talks.

Tens of thousands of people have been killed in the war that has dragged on for more than a decade and cost billions of dollars.

Earlier this month, Taliban officials held three days of talks with US special representative for Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad in Qatar, aimed at renewing the peace process.

The Afghan government has not been involved in these talks.

Last week, a five-member Taliban delegation headed to the Russian capital, Moscow, to attend for the first time an international conference to discuss the Afghan peace efforts.

"A second phase (of discussions) should be held among Afghans (themselves) on how to bring about peace and form a government in Afghanistan," Sohail Shaheen, a Qatar-based spokesperson for the Taliban, told reporters in Moscow last week. (Aljazeera)

(4) Afghan Leaders...

The Geneva Conference which is organized by the United Nations and the government of Afghanistan launched on Tuesday with high-ranking officials from over 60 countries as well as a large number of representatives from international bodies in attendance. (ATN)

(5) People in...

workers are the beneficiaries of the Milko Company, built in 2007," Meya Sahib, the owner of the plant told Xinhua recently.

With sub-industries in the neighboring Helmand, Zabul and some other parts of the Kandahar province netting a monthly revenue of 22.5 million afghanis (295,000 U.S. dollars), the Milko Company supplies other milk-based products such as cheese, milk-cream, butter and yogurt.

Meanwhile, Mohammadullah Noori, the promotion manager of the provincial agriculture department, said both milk processing units were of a high standard and besides this, thousands of liters of milk of various types were being processed, packed and sold through other small functional enterprises in parts of the provincial capital Kandahar city and adjoining areas every day.

The official said more milk processing factories were needed in the province. Despite some social and traditional restrictions in girls' education in the province, up to 800 girls, far more compared to only 200 to 400 girls of previous years, have graduated from 12 grades this year.

With nearly 100 schools currently remaining closed, official figures show that 377 schools, with 362,000 students including 79,000 girls, are now operational in the province.

The number of girls leaving school before graduation has been considerably reduced, since the figure was very high, with up to 60 percent of female students prematurely leaving education in the past.

In the southern provinces of the country, growing poppies in remote areas and many districts

However, a lot of addicted women have enrolled in a newly established addiction recovery center for treatment. Women are being provided with short-term professional training, in addition to their treatment.

"Many women are willingly coming and registering their names with the women's drug treatment center," said Nasima, chairperson of the center. (Xinhua)

(6) Humanitarian Groups...

going to school, the report says. But attacks on schools, students and teachers and the military use of schools is the biggest factor of all, Bodmer-Roy said.

Just in the first half of 2018 there have been more attacks on education than in the whole of 2017, she said.

"In fact it's double what we saw in 2017," Bodmer-Roy said. "And that just the attacks that we can verify, we think that in reality the number is much higher." (Agencies)

(7) Rise in US Deaths...

Utah, and a major in the Utah National Guard, was killed by an Afghan soldier in Kabul. Last Saturday, Sgt. Leandro Jasso, a 25-year-old Army

Ranger from Leavenworth, Washington, was mortally wounded in southern Afghanistan. On Tuesday, U.S. officials said they had determined that Jasso probably was accidentally shot by an Afghan soldier during battle with an al-Qaida fighter.

The U.S. military headquarters in Kabul announced Tuesday that three U.S. servicemembers were killed and three wounded by a roadside bomb in Ghazni province, south of Kabul, where the Taliban has been resurgent. It was the deadliest attack on U.S. forces in Afghanistan this year.

The Taliban, who ruled Afghanistan before U.S. forces invaded in October 2001, carry out near-daily attacks on Afghan army and police forces, and in August the insurgents overran parts of Ghazni, leading to days of intense fighting before they were driven out. Ghazni was the only one of Afghanistan's 34 provinces where parliamentary elections could not be held in October because of security worries. Voting there has been postponed for a year.

Stephen Biddle, a professor of international and public affairs at Columbia University who has closely tracked the war from its beginning, said little that has happened in Afghanistan in recent years has grabbed the American public's attention, including a death toll since 2001 that now exceeds 2,400.

"The war hasn't produced torch-lit marches on the Pentagon or for that matter any meaningful effect on any election campaign," Biddle said. "What (the uptick in casualties) could do is change the mind of Donald Trump. At a minimum, he is erratic and clearly doesn't like the war."

In a Washington Post interview Tuesday, Trump called the latest deaths "very sad" and said he was keeping troops there only because "experts" told him it was necessary.

Trump's predecessor, Barack Obama, ended the U.S. combat mission in Afghanistan in 2014 with the aim of compelling the Afghans to provide for their own defense. Trump came to the White House having called the war a waste, but in August 2017, he announced he was recommitting U.S. forces to winning in Afghanistan while revealing that his first instinct had been to pull the plug. Over several months, the Pentagon sent an additional 3,500 troops and changed the way it advises Afghan forces. There are now about 15,000 U.S. troops in the country.

Trump's strategy in Afghanistan is built on hope that the Taliban can be drawn into peace talks. That has not yet happened, but some U.S. analysts say prospects are better than at any time in the war. A second pillar of the strategy, ending Pakistan's tacit support for the Taliban, has proved ineffective.

David Sedney, who has worked on Afghan issues as a diplomat and civilian policy official since the war began, said he believes the chances for successful peace talks with the Taliban are low but are better than at any other time in the long conflict. Sedney said he heard encouraging words from Afghans - supporters of the government as well as those who favor the Taliban - during a visit to the county in late October and early November.

"There's a growing expectation that peace is possible," Sedney said.

Further complicating the outlook is the presence in eastern Afghanistan of an Islamic State affiliate. Both the Taliban and the IS affiliate want to overthrow the Afghan government and impose a harsh form of Islamic rule. But they are bitterly divided over leadership, ideology and tactics. Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said earlier this month that efforts to draw the Taliban into peace talks are being made "below the surface." But he indicated that progress is insufficient. "We're a long way from where we could say that we're on the right path," Dunford said at the Halifax International Security Forum, referring to effectively combining military, political and social pressure on the Taliban.

Noting that U.S. officials as recently as a year ago called the war a stalemate, Dunford said "it hasn't changed much" since. (AP)

(8) Asia-Pacific...

and gaps in implementing the ambitious Programme of Action adopted in Cairo in 1994. Going forward, delegates also identified priority actions to address a broad set of population-related challenges, as well as new and

emerging trends.

A summary of the discussions highlighted that, while the region had experienced a reduction in both income and multi-dimensional poverty, as well as seen an improvement in life expectancy, poverty in some countries had in fact increased.

Participants also recognized declines in maternal and infant mortality as some of the major health achievements across the region, with several delegations attributing these reductions to improved access to quality maternal and child health care.

The link between human rights, sexual and reproductive health, and the achievement of the Programme of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals was underscored throughout the meeting with several countries highlighting their commitment to universal access to sexual and reproductive health services, including voluntary family planning, and to eliminate all forms of discrimination in the provision of these services.

Migration was a key issue during the three-day gathering, as countries highlighted the benefits of remittances and other contributions of migrants, including women migrant workers. They, however, noted the need for more comprehensive migration data.

Overall, the commitment to achieving gender equality was encouraging as participants shared good practices, policies, and legislative changes that were undertaken to advance gender equality, including strengthening institutional mechanisms for gender mainstreaming.

At the close of the meeting, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP, Mr. Kaveh Zahedi said, "Over the course of our deliberations, we have rightfully recognized the achievements of the region. However, we have also seen that at a time of unprecedented economic growth, some of our most vulnerable communities are being left behind." He added that "Reaching those who are furthest behind requires an increase in investments in people, including in essential health-care services. It also requires shining the spotlight on those being left behind with better data and information to support policies and help monitor progress in implementing the ICPD Programme of Action."

Asia-Pacific Regional Director of the United Nations Population Fund Mr. Bjorn Andersson said, "ICPD has served as a foundation for the work UNFPA does in our region and globally." He further noted that "This week, member States have demonstrated their strong commitment to the Programme of Action, making evident that ICPD is integral to the 2030 Agenda. Countries clearly recognize that without achieving ICPD, we cannot achieve the SDGs. ICPD, which turns 25 next year, is truly more crucial and relevant than ever."

The Chair's summary will inform the global review of the ICPD Programme of Action at the 52nd Session of the Commission on Population and Development in New York in 2019. (ESCAP News)

(9) Abdullah Seeks...

The drought has also resulted in a 25 percent increase in the number of children under five suffering from acute malnutrition, totaling over 600,000 minors at higher risk of death in the affected provinces, he said.

As winter approaches, the biggest concern for Afghanistan is the people who live in the areas mostly affected by the drought. These are also the areas with the highest level of under-nutrition and food insecurity, Abdullah said.

"In the short term, we need to make sure that we have a sufficiently large emergency response so that we can lessen their food insecurity and the higher risk of mortality that comes with it," he added.

Abdullah said that both the Afghan government and the international community have shown their commitment to tackling the drought since the beginning of the problem.

The Afghan government has shown its commitment by mobilizing 60,000 tons of wheat from its strategic grain reserve to feed 1.4 million people in need, he said.

It has shown its leadership by chairing the emergency drought response meetings over the past many months. Abdullah said that the support of the international community was crucial in dealing with the drought - both in terms of coordination and financial support.

We must think about the long term, because worldwide trends show that in the long term, droughts are not going to cease," he added.

Agriculture and related sectors are under threat from extreme weather events, as demonstrated by the current drought that leads to land degradation and desertification, causing lower production, food insecurity, economic degradation, displacement and loss of lives, he said.

"As we look to Afghanistan's future, I am confident that our humanitarian and development partners will work with us, not only to implement programming that focuses on increased social, environmental and financial resiliency, but also to build sustainability through institutions and capacity-building" he concluded. (Pajhwok)

(10) Residents Claim...

that night. The airstrike started at 9pm and killed the entire family," said Ahmadullah, a resident of Garmsir.

"We ask government to prevent civilian casualties," said Fida Mohammad, a resident of Garmsir.

Meanwhile, Helmand governor Mohammad Yasin confirmed the airstrike and said that Taliban as well as civilians have suffered casualties in the operation.

However, he did not give details on exact number of civilian casualties in the airstrike.

"Taliban had gathered in the village from other areas and wanted to plan an attack on Garmsir district and our security belts were under threat for the past few days. Then the forces started operation," the governor said.

"A number of key Taliban members were under surveillance of the Air Force. The airstrike has inflicted casualties on both sides," Yasin said.

A Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, has claimed in a social media post that the foreign forces airstrike in Helmand has killed 23 civilians. (Tolo news)

(11) Rise in Home...

Shiberghan, said the city's situation was 'extremely dangerous' as many people had moved to other places due to insecurity and criminals.

"The current situation is not affordable to live with, residents would stage protests if a strong action is not taken against robbers and dacoits," she said.

Mah Gul, another resident of Shiberghan whose daughter's house had been robbed twice, said: "We have shared these incidents with elders and local security officials but no change occurred."

Col. Mohammad Yousuf Muhiuddinpur, in charge of the human rights section at the Jawzjan police headquarters, said they were trying to arrest robbers. Police Chief Brig. Gen. Faqir Mohammad Jawzjani said a joint team of police and intelligence operatives had been formed to identify and arrest robbers.

"The robbers will be arrested at any cost," he vowed. (Pajhwok)

(12) Taliban...

wanted to weaken the bases of powerful leaders in the north like Gen. Dostum, Atta Mohammad Noor and Mohaqqiq.

The public representative alleged the security sector ministers and Chief of Army Staff Gen. Mohammad Sharif Yafali were neglecting the situation in Faryab for their ethnically-biased approach.

Another member of the provincial council, Fazl Haq Mohammad, said some 20,000 families had been displaced as a result of the fall of districts and insecurities.

Meanwhile, Faryab governor Naqibullah Faiq said 80 percent of Faryab province was in control of the Taliban and accused the Ministry of Defense and the army chief of ethnic discrimination and claimed the ministry had paid no attention to Faryab over the past one month.

But MoD spokesman Javed Ghafor rejected the allegations of the governor, provincial council members and civil society activists.

He said the MoD did not act on ethnic lines and that the Taliban were inflicted heavy casualties in Faryab last night as part of operations to protect the people of the province.

But presidential advisor Abdul Hasnan, who led a delegation to Faryab, said the concerns of the provincial council and the civil society regarding the security situation in the province were real. He said he would share problems and demands of the people of Faryab with the president in written form. (Pajhwok)