

(1) Fresh Aid...

with Afghan women, and youths - because we know very well that investing in Afghanistan, in the Afghan people and in the strength and the wisdom of the Afghan people, is the way of investing in international stability and in our own present and future," Mogherini remarked.

On behalf of Afghans, Ghani thanked the EU and international organisations for fruitfully conducting the conference and their generous commitments to Afghanistan.

He said joint work of the Afghan government with the EU was the reason why the conference ended on a productive note. Civil society, media and the private sector also played an important role, Ghani acknowledged.

The private sector's \$1.1 billion in the past three months was indicative of a positive change in Afghanistan, Ghani observed. His government would immediately start its work, ensuring full transparency.

Ghani left for Belgium at the head of a high-level delegation to attend the Brussels Conference on October 4 and 5. He returned to Kabul on Thursday morning. (Pajhwok)

(2) EU Stresses...

and Development, Neven Mimica, on behalf of the European Union.

On behalf of Afghanistan, Minister of Foreign Affairs Salahuddin Rabbani and Minister of Finance Ekil Ahmad Hakimi co-chaired the event, which was held under the patronage of the European Council President Donald Tusk and President Ashraf Ghani.

The conference adopted a Joint communiqué renewing the Partnership for Peace and Development, which reflects the breadth of the international community's engagement over the coming four years.

This includes political and financial support, amounting to €13.6 billion for the period 2017-2020, and will be accompanied by continued and accountable reforms on the ground. The European Union and member states are together the largest donor, expecting to provide up to €5 billion, including all funding sources, of this overall figure.

In her welcome address, the High Representative emphasised that support for Afghanistan is crucial not only for the Afghan people and the future of Afghanistan, but also for the region and the wider international community.

She said: "Afghanistan stands at the crossroads of Central Asia and the Indian Ocean, of South Asia and the Middle East. It can become a crucial hub for economic growth in the area and for connectivity among different parts of the world."

"Today we see an emerging regional consensus for greater economic but also diplomatic and political cooperation towards a stable, secure, and democratic Afghanistan. Here in Brussels we have set the stage for a new regional and international deal for peace and development in the country."

Mogherini also organized a meeting of key international partners, including United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry, regional partners at ministerial level, including the China, India and Pakistan.

She found among the participants a common basis for stepping up regional political support to the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan. (Pajhwok)

(3) US Watchdog ...

wasted by funding non-existent positions in the security forces, John Sopko, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, wrote in a letter to the U.S. Defense Department.

"Persistent reports indicating discrepancies between the assigned force strength of the (Afghan security forces) and the actual number of personnel serving raise questions regarding whether the U.S. government is taking adequate steps to prevent taxpayer funds from being spent on so-called 'ghost' soldiers," Sopko wrote.

Afghan forces are struggling to defend against Taliban militants seeking to reimpose a fundamentalist Islamist government in Afghanistan, as well as other militant groups. In northern Afghanistan, government troops have been battling since Monday to try to clear Taliban fighters from positions they seized in key city of Kunduz.

Nationally, the Afghan army and police have an approved strength of about 320,000, but officials say the real number is much lower than that. Heavy casualties and soldiers and police deserting or not reporting for duty mean security forces lose thousands of personnel every month,

which they struggle to replace.

The shortage of personnel has been most acutely felt in hot spots like Helmand province in southwest Afghanistan, where a lack of troops has undermined efforts to blunt Taliban gains.

Officials in Helmand have said as many as half the security forces on the rolls did not exist, with much of the salaries for the non-existent troops going to corrupt leaders, Sopko said, citing media reports.

The U.S. Department of Defense has taken steps to try to prevent fraud by automating some systems and collecting biometric data to track police and soldiers, but Sopko said such measures would only be effective if accurate data on Afghan force levels was collected and maintained. (Reuters)

(4) India Pledges ...

and economic development in Afghanistan.

New Delhi continued to work with Kabul to ensure reliable access for its products to India's markets through land, sea and air, Akbar added.

"Our commitment to Afghanistan is abiding, as is our cherished desire to work with the people and government of one of our closest friends towards peace, stability and progress." India had dedicated its efforts and resources to bilateral cooperation with Afghanistan, with provision of year-round regional connectivity, the minister said.

India has completed significant development schemes including scientific water management through dams and infrastructure projects like highways, worth over \$ 2 billion. It recently committed \$ 1 billion more in aid.

The Zeran-Delaram road, with the potential to connect Iran to major cities of Afghanistan through a ring road, has been constructed by India.

He also referred to the Chabahar port in Iran, saying India maintained sharp focus on strengthening Afghanistan's economy. Afghanistan's exports have traditionally found their most lucrative market in India. Afghanistan as the 'Heart of Asia' offered energy routes such as TAPI and CASA-1000 through the arteries of the region, Akbar noted, saying connectivity, like progress, was not a zero-sum game. "It is, in fact, a zero-plus opportunity." (Pajhwok)

(5) Sharif Calls...

claiming an ongoing military offensive had broken the back of terrorists.

A statement from Sharif's office said Gen Pavel appreciated Pakistan's role in eradicating terrorism in recent years. "The reconstruction and rebuilding process would be worth following."

Pakistan could play an important role in the region, he believed: "We expect a broader political framework agreement between Pakistan and Nato to unlock further mutual military cooperation."

Sharif told Pavel: "We have conveyed to the leadership of Afghanistan that the enemies of Afghanistan are the enemies of Pakistan and we have stood by our words."

At a separate meeting with Pavel, National Security Advisor (NSA) Lt. General @ Nasser Khan Janjua commended NATO's efforts towards peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Janjua briefed his interlocutor on National Action Plan and Operation Zarb-i-Azb aimed at the elimination of terrorism from Pakistan. He called for shifting focus from winning the war to winning peace in the region. (Pajhwok)

(6) Russia Urged

on a visit to Islamabad, said: "Russian companies have a rich experience in the energy sector..."

At a meeting on Thursday, Pakistan invited Russia to join the project for the transmission of thermal energy from October till May, a time window when hydel generation is lower in the two Central Asian countries. Sentyurin conferred on the suggestion during his meeting with Water and Power Ministry Secretary Muhammad Younus Dagha.

Under the CASA-1000 project, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan will transmit their hydel electricity through the transmission line to Pakistan during the summer months; from May to October.

But from October to April, the line would be available to transmit Russian thermal energy, Dagha said, adding Russia could avail the period to transmit thermal energy. (Pajhwok)

(7) Afghan...

to develop infrastructure and bring prosperity to all Afghans.

ADB, which will celebrate its 50th anniversary this year, is Afghanistan's largest infrastructure de-

velopment partner.

ADB-financed projects include the first energy transmission interconnection with neighboring countries, the first railway line, and new technical assistance to improve the Salang Corridor, which will greatly enhance transit connectivity between Central and South Asia.

In 2016, ADB will allocate \$571 million for project financing in the country, including \$315 million in cofinancing. Over the next four years (2017-2020), ADB aims to approve \$878 million in grants, including \$20 million for disaster risk reduction and the rest for transport, energy, and agriculture and natural resources sectors, with special attention to regional cooperation, governance, and capacity building.

Zhang said ADB-financed projects had resulted in substantial improvements in infrastructure. However, many current projects were facing delays due to the security situation as well as capacity and implementation constraints, he added.

"ADB will continue to work closely with the government to accelerate project implementation and overcome challenges," he said.

Afghanistan is the founding member of ADB and to date it has received over \$4.3 billion in grants and loans from ADB. (Pajhwok)

(8) US Warns ...

employees and their family members is restricted and requires prior approval from the Department of State.

Embassy personnel are restricted from traveling to all locations in Kabul except the embassy and other US government facilities unless there is a compelling government interest in permitting such travel that outweighs the risk. (Pajhwok)

(9) 200,000 Afghan

Pakistan introduced a new border management system at Pak-Afghan in June, which further contributed in returning of Afghan refugees.

The Spokesperson said the new border management prompted around 6,000 Afghans to go back every day. Dunya Aslam Khan said, "Many heads of the families are working in Afghanistan and coming to visit their families living in Pakistan. (APP)

(10) Afghan Forces...

days. However, it has been said the war is not the solution to ending the crisis in the country.

"The only way is an Afghan-owned agreement. Anti-government groups should sit with Afghan government and find a solution," said Sayed Naqibullah Hashemi, a political commentator.

NATO has 13,000 troops in Afghanistan who are mostly in an advise, assist and train capacity. (Tolonews)

(11) US Hands ...

in the future from the United States in the a bid to improve the capabilities of the police forces.

According to the ministry the delivery of the Humvees to the police forces by US was part of the country's support to the Afghan forces in the framework of the Resolute Support mission led by NATO.

This comes as the United States Department of Defense (DoD) awarded a contract worth \$109 million for the purchase of 433 Humvee vehicles to the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF).

The contract was awarded to AM General by the Department of Defense (DoD) last months as efforts are underway to boost capabilities of the Afghan forces as they face a resurgent Taliban.

"AM General, South Bend, Indiana, was awarded a \$108,766,885 modification (P00023) to foreign military sales contract (Afghanistan) W56HZV-15-C-0155 for 433 High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles," (DoD) said in a statement.

DoD further added that "Work will be performed in Mishawaka, Indiana, with an estimated completion date of Sept. 29, 2017. Fiscal 2015 other procurement funds in the amount of \$108,766,855 were obligated at the time of the award. Army Contracting Command, Warren, Michigan, is the contracting activity."

Earlier DoD awarded a contract to AM General for the manufacture and delivery of 1,673 Humvees to the Afghan forces earlier in August this year.

The contract called on AM General to deliver 1,259 units of the M1151A1B1 and 414 units of the M1152A1B2 models. (KP)

(12) Ghani Meets...

community for sustainable economic development and growth in Afghanistan.

The Afghan President thanked Pakistan's pledge of further \$500 million

economic assistance to Afghanistan at the Brussels Conference, which demonstrated Pakistan's solidarity and support for the Government and people of Afghanistan. He suggested that the two governments should work together to identify the projects in consultation with Afghan Government according to its development priorities. President Ghani also appreciated the announcement of a second tranche of 3,000 scholarships for Afghan students in Pakistani universities, which would greatly help institution building in Afghanistan.

The Afghan President and Adviser also discussed efforts for peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan. Emphasising that lasting peace and stability could be achieved through a politically negotiated settlement, Adviser Sartaj Aziz commended Afghan Government and people for concluding a peace deal with Hizb-i-Islami. He expressed hope and optimism that this development could lead to opportunities for similar peace arrangements with other insurgents.

Recalling Pakistan's serious efforts for facilitating peace talks between Afghan Government and Taliban, Sartaj Aziz conveyed that Pakistan will continue to make these efforts through the framework of the QCG. President Ashraf Ghani expressed concern that Taliban's continued refusal to join the peace process was causing perpetuation of violence, killings and suffering in Afghanistan. (PR)

(13) Hopes for...

graduated recently from a private university in Kabul and has been working at the site for four months. She said the fact the restoration was so unusual meant there was more freedom for younger engineers and women in particular than there would be in a standard construction project.

"It's different from a new building so it's a new experience for everyone. We can learn from the project but we can also share our opinions," she said.

"People don't put much value on women in Afghanistan but this project will show that women can do anything." (Reuters)

(14) Women's...

are newly arrived to America, while others have been here for several years. Their mentors and teachers are mostly Afghan-Americans who are naturalized American citizens.

Supported with state and federal money, WAW was formed prior to the September 11, 2001, terror attacks to help Afghan women overcome illiteracy and domestic violence in Queens' Afghan community. The organization beefed up its program after the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan, redoubling efforts to educate and deal with community fears.

In New York, according to the Afghan Consulate and local mosques, the Afghan population is estimated at 20,000 families. The Afghan community traditionally has been a patriarchal society, with women in more submissive roles. That can lead to spousal abuse, fewer education opportunities and other issues resulting from a lack of rights.

Manizha Naderi, WAW's executive director, said, "We're trying to make sure Afghan women are safe. Our aim is for women to have access to education, justice, so they can be normal citizens."

WAW also wants to change ingrained cultural habits.

"It's not an easy task where decades of gender imbalance has been going on," said Naderi. "We work with the communities - not just women, but with the families - because Afghanistan is a patriarchal society, and women don't want to leave their families. They just want to be safe within their families."

Sitara Momand, 43, came to New York in 2013 as a divorcee with a young daughter.

"I was married to a very violent husband," Momand told VOA. "We were living with my in-laws but could not take the violence from my ex-husband and my in-laws any longer. I left Afghanistan and went to Pakistan to escape the violence. Then I came to America."

Crucial basic skills In addition to helping women get jobs and places to live, Women for Afghan Women places great emphasis on education. Skills also are taught to younger Afghan-Americans in WAW's Young Leadership Program.

"These are primarily young women, some as young as 15. Some had been forced into marriages they didn't want," said Naderi. "We teach them empowerment, how to ask for their rights, what their rights are, what the rights of women in Islam are,

and what the rights of the family are. And, you know, education is the key to it, to everything."

According to Naderi, since the girls leadership program began in 2005, not one girl in the community has been forced to marry. (VoA)

(15) Dozens of ...

to boost Afghanistan's ability to defeat the Taliban and the AWOL students were undergoing instruction in a variety of topics, including leadership, language, infantry, aircrew, intelligence, engineering, military police, ordnance, transportation and Army Ranger training, US officials said.

A large number of Afghan soldiers and police have undergone training in the US since the international effort to build-up Afghanistan's security forces began. Since 2007, US facilities have hosted 2,207 Afghan trainees, the Department of Defense said in a statement.

"It is important to note that the majority - well over 90% - of Afghans who train in the US successfully complete their training and return to their country," Evans told CNN.

But Pentagon officials also said that the US is looking at ways to curtail these type of incidents. "DoD is assessing ways to strengthen eligibility criteria for training in ways that will reduce the likelihood of an individual Afghan willingly absconding from training in the US and going AWOL," Evans added.

US officials also stressed that there is currently a vetting process in place as part of the requirements of the "Leahy Law," which governs rules for the training of foreign military and security personnel.

The vetting is to insure the students have no links to terrorist or insurgent groups and have not committed any human rights violations. The trainees are also required to go through the regular US visa application process.

"If at any time they fail one of these steps, they are ineligible to go to this training or any future US-funded training," Defense Department spokesman Adam Stump told CNN. Afghan security personnel are also screened for such ties by the Afghanistan government upon enlistment. The eight trainees that went missing in September were not acting as a group when they vanished, Stump said.

The September uptick in disappearances could be related to the summer season in Afghanistan which tends to witness an increase in fighting as the Taliban typically launch their offensives during that time. One such attack brought Taliban fighters close to the center of the provincial capital city of Kunduz, a push that was recently beaten back by Afghan troops backed by airstrikes and US special operations forces.

But most experts believe the disappearances are likely more tied to economic concerns as many of the Afghan trainees have received extensive English language training and therefore think they would be better able to find work in the US or Canada.

Back in 2014 three trainees went AWOL from a facility in Massachusetts. The eight that absconded in September did so from military facilities in Fort Benning, Georgia, Fort Gordon, Georgia, Fort Lee, Virginia, Little Rock Air Force Base, Arkansas, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and Monterey, California. (CNN)

(16) Lack of Local...

gap between people and government has increased," said Mohammad Asghar Maihanar, a civil society activist in Kunduz.

"The [Kunduz] city was destroyed and it happens all the time, but no one tries to bring the city's situation under control. There are thousands of security force members in Kunduz, but there is no coordination among them," said Adila Hussaini, a resident of the city.

Reports indicate that two rockets were fired near the Kunduz governor's office on Thursday where the Interior Minister Taj Mohammad Jahid had a meeting with local officials. A number of security force members were wounded in the rocket attack, reports indicate.

Talking on Kunduz situation, Defense Ministry spokesman Dawlat Waziri said: "Taliban attacked the city while they had clothes same as local residents. This is a problem in guerilla wars, but on the battlefields, Taliban does not have the power to face our security forces."

This comes after parts of Kunduz city including the main circle were overrun by the Taliban earlier this week, but according to security forces, most parts of the city have been retaken after a large-scale military operation conducted by Afghan forces in the northern province. (Tolonews)

(17) Residents...

thousands of civilians are trapped in increasingly dire conditions.

The organization said it has interviewed medical workers and civilians stuck in Kunduz amid fighting after the Taliban launched an assault on 3 October.

According to the organization, Kunduz residents have described grim scenes as food and water supplies have been exhausted and electricity was cut. The city's civilian hospital has run out of medical supplies and sustained rocket and gunfire attacks on 5 October.

"Civilians in Kunduz are once again at a precipice, and time is running out. Unless all parties to the conflict permit a humanitarian corridor to allow vital aid in and people to flee, we could soon be looking at a devastating humanitarian crisis," said Champa Patel, South Asia Director at Amnesty International.

"International humanitarian law clearly prohibits launching attacks against, or from, civilian areas - those suspected of criminal responsibility must be brought to justice in fair trials," Patel said. (Tolonews)

(18) 3 ANA Soldiers ...

bodies of 21 soldiers were still lying at the site, he said.

Ahmedi added one entire battalion was captured, as the attackers seized a tank, five other vehicles and weapons. But officials rejected the Taliban claim as groundless. (Pajhwok)

(19) After 3 Hours ...

11am was still underway, he added. Obaidullah, a resident of the Noorak locality of Qalat, claimed earlier in the day the road remained shut and hundreds of vehicles stranded. (Pajhwok)

(20) Security Forces,

Roohullah, a resident of the Shahikhel village of the district, said: "I saw myself two Ranger vehicles, three Humvees and a huge tank on fire as the battles between security forces and Taliban raged."

He had no information about casualties among the security personnel, saying that 17 Taliban were killed, including four commanders. (Pajhwok)

(21) Russia Warns...

unidentified flying objects." He added that any missile strikes against territories controlled by the Syrian government might present a threat to Russian servicemen working for the Russian Center for Reconciliation in Syria. (Xinhua)

(22) Russian, French...

In response, the Russian Foreign Ministry said Monday that the United States was trying to shift the blame on Russia. (Xinhua)

(23) Rising Moves...

capability of its high-powered rocket engine based on the DPRK's state media report.

The DPRK's official KCNA news agency reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong Un guided the test of "a new-type high-powered engine of a carrier rocket for geo-stationary satellite" at the Sohae Space Center in the country's west coast. The state media said it was a great success. (Xinhua)

(24) Antonio Guterres...

PROFILE OF ANTONIO GUTERRES Guterres, a 67-year-old politician, served as UN High Commissioner for Refugees from June 2005 to December 2015. (Xinhua)

(25) Syrian Army...

Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based watchdog group, said the recent progress of the Syrian army is the first in three years against the rebels in Aleppo.

Following a last month faltering truce, President Bashar al-Assad pledged to restore all Aleppo cit. (Xinhua)

(26) DPRK Blasts ...

The political and military stand-off with the DPRK," the statement added.

The DPRK, in order to defend itself from political, economic pressure and military threat, has bolstered nuclear force both in quality and quantity and has now become a nuclear power with powerful nuclear attack capabilities, said the statement. (Xinhua)

(27) Iran Denies ...

transferring weapons to the Houthi fighters in violation of UN Resolution 2216.

Iran denied Saudi claims, saying that allegations about transporting arms into Yemen were "unfounded and undocumented." (Xinhua)