

**UNAMA**

**United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan**

Strategic Communication and Spokespersons Unit, Kabul, Afghanistan

**Transcript**

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## **TRANSCRIPT**

### **Press Conference with the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Ján Kubiš**

(near verbatim; edited for clarity)

Kabul – Thursday, 12 June 2014

#### **Participants:**

- **United Nations Special Representative for Afghanistan Ján Kubiš**
- **UNAMA Spokesperson Nazifullah Salarzai**

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**Nazifullah Salarzai:** Good Morning. Apologies for a short delay and welcome to today's press conference of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA, Ján Kubiš, will speak to you in this press conference. With no further delay, let's give the floor to Mr. Kubiš.

**Ján Kubiš:** Salam alakoom and once again apologies on my side. I had an urgent meeting. I tried to cut it short, but I had to finish it. That's why I am a little bit late here.

The reason for this press conference is clear – because Afghanistan is heading for, we all hope, one of the most important days in the modern history of the country: the run-off of the Presidential elections on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June.

I am convinced – after the excellent performance, after millions of voters took part in the vote on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April – that a similar upsurge of initiative, of interest and of civic responsibility will be shown on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June by the people of Afghanistan.

I am convinced that next Saturday the people of Afghanistan will – with the same determination resilience and courage [shown in the first round of elections] – manifest their wish for a peaceful, prosperous, stable and united Afghanistan in the future, one that is leaving the past behind and looking to a peaceful, stable, prosperous and united future.

It is only the people of Afghanistan that can make decisions for their country. No one else can make and should be allowed to make decisions on their behalf. That's why my first message from this press conference is to the people of Afghanistan: use the opportunity, deliver the necessary change, reinforce the fundamentals of your future, take part in the elections. It doesn't matter that sometimes the conditions are not perfect; it doesn't matter that sometimes there are security challenges. You have the fate of yourself, your children and your country in your hands – go and vote.

My second message is to the security forces of the country: the people of Afghanistan are rightly proud of you. You honoured them by your performance during the first round of the elections. And I have no doubt – none of us has any doubt – about your ability, resilience, capability and courage to provide a secure environment for the elections as you did for the first round. We trust you, the people of Afghanistan trust you, and we know that you will be up to the task once again.

My third message is to the election management bodies, to the Independent Election Commission (IEC) and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC). Both Commissions did a good job in the first round, but the first round of the elections – I am speaking about the Presidential elections – also showed a lot of imperfections and deficiencies and these imperfections and deficiencies should be corrected.

The public, domestic observers, international observers, candidates, their supporters – they raised a number of concerns and pointed out a number of imperfections and requested changes. The two campaigns provided a joint list of recommendations on what kind of processes should be improved for the run-off and on the necessary technical improvements of the process.

My appeal to the two election management bodies is to fully implement the recommendations and requests of the two campaigns – they jointly produced a list of recommendations and that's admirable – and improve the process in such a way so as to increase confidence in your performance in the eyes of the people and in the eyes of the candidates.

Election workers, both at the central level and provinces and districts: be fully aware of your responsibilities. You must act impartially. The fate of your country is in your hands. It's a shared responsibility, of course, with the people and with the candidates and supporters of the candidates, but it's a major responsibility. Don't be influenced by power brokers in different parts of the country, deliver on what is your duty to your country and to your people – act impartially, act as real servants of the people and not for individual interests.

My next message is to the supporters of the two candidates that are competing for the top post in the country: do not commit fraud; do not use intimidation or manipulation to favour your candidate; go and vote as responsible citizens, but don't commit fraud and don't allow anyone to commit fraud or create conditions for committing fraud.

This concerns the candidate's supporters who are working in election institutions, security institutions and state institutions. Your right is to go and vote. Use the right, but you would

dishonour your obligation and duties and you would dishonour the candidates by either allowing fraud or committing fraud, and by not remaining impartial.

My next message is to the candidates themselves and to their campaigns: first of all, a message of congratulations – you campaigned well, you reached out to the people of the country, you tried to convince them with your programmes and that's the way. Yes, sometimes there were some statements that were not in conformity with decent campaigning, but it never came from the top levels. And I would like to once again congratulate you for your very extensive campaigns. Now that the campaign period is over, the voting period will start, but you have a continuing and strong responsibility – first, to urge your supporters once again to vote but not commit fraud in your name. And second: request improvements – there is always time until election day and after election day – in the performance of the election management bodies. Observe their work as much as you can, both at the headquarters level but also throughout the country, and be as demanding in your requests and observation as necessary. But, at the same time, respect the work of the election management bodies, respect due process. It's equally important as requesting them to improve their performance.

Part of a responsible attitude is also not to jump to conclusions – that's a natural instinct of every politician during election day and then, immediately after election day, to come out with all sorts of statements, jumping to conclusions, coming out with assessments. Refrain from doing so. Give time to the two election management bodies to do their work before coming out with assessments and jumping to conclusions. It could only stir up certain sentiments and that would not do good for the country and could create problems. Act responsibly, not only as politicians, but as citizens of this country.

My last message is to the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan: help the country, help Afghanistan to have the best possible and the most secure possible elections; take measures if you are asked to take them by the authorities of Afghanistan that would create the most conducive conditions for holding the elections in Afghanistan on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June.

To conclude, I am looking forward – all of us friends of Afghanistan are looking forward – to the 14<sup>th</sup> of June. We are convinced that the people of Afghanistan will come out and vote and shape a better future for Afghanistan and we are very happy that we can accompany and support you.

Thank you for your attention.

**Nazifullah Salarzai:** It is now time for your questions. Please introduce yourself, one question at a time. We have got only 20 minutes because another press conference will start at 11:00 a.m. at this same venue.

### **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

**KHORSHID TV [translated from Dari]:** The question is regarding the observation by international observers. Previously, the IEC expressed the concern that only 25 per cent of the international observers managed to go to the polling stations and polling sites. And this time we would like to know, as a partner of Afghanistan, what is your decision and what number of

international observers will you deploy to observe the electoral process? The second part of my question: will you be willing to send international observers in the districts and other areas where there is no security, or if they are insecure?

**Ján Kubiš:** I will start not with international observers, but with domestic observers. International observers can only complement the effort of the domestic observers and of candidates' agents because these are the people of Afghanistan – they have the stake in the fate of Afghanistan and it's critically important that it's the domestic observers that are deployed in big numbers; that they cover the majority, if not all, but the overwhelming majority of the polling centres and polling stations throughout the country.

I am happy that both campaigns plan to deploy thousands, even tens of thousands, of candidates' agents. They received cumulatively – each of the campaigns – around 25,000 legitimization cards that would allow their agents to be present at, in a way theoretically, all of the polling stations throughout the country. On top of this, domestic observer organizations are speaking about deploying thousands of people. There are several of them, and again they will go and work throughout the country. And just to complement these national efforts,, there will be hundreds of international observers, mostly in Kabul but also some other parts of the country.

**ARIANA NEWS [translated from Dari]:** My question is regarding UN concern with the second round of the elections and fraud in the second round. In case the second round election is marked by fraud, and the results will not be accepted by a majority of the Afghan people, what position might the UN take?

**Ján Kubiš:** The first of round of the election showed that although fraud was present, it was less than at any time before in the elections of Afghanistan. That's the statement of domestic observers and of the campaigns – not only of the international observers. This is encouraging.

As the first round showed – there were imperfections and, indeed, in some cases, instances of fraud – and the people of Afghanistan, the candidates, domestic observers and international observers proposed a number of measures that should help with fraud prevention and mitigation, and requested that the two election management bodies introduce them in their work so as to limit the possibility of further instances of imperfections. Sometimes it's not fraud as such, but simply a lack of experience or mistakes that are being made. But sometimes it is fraud, so these measures were requested and a lot of us have been working with the two election management bodies to see to it that they are then introduced in their work practices.

I am happy to inform that, according to our information, the two Commissions – notably, the Commission that organizes the election, the IEC – reacted positively to the requests from the two campaigns and from the people of Afghanistan, and have introduced a number of good changes that would work against fraud and increase transparency and the credibility of the process. That should send a strong signal to the people of Afghanistan that their votes will be counted and will count – and this is also encouraging for people to go and vote.

**VOICE OF AMERICA:** Could you please tell me what your recommendations would be to the candidates, post-election, to ensure a successful outcome of this vote. In other words, how important is it that they accept the outcome?

**Ján Kubiš:** My first recommendation to the candidates is, and I am just repeating from some earlier messages: it is necessary for them to continue working with the two election management bodies to see continuous improvements. Improvements could be and should be

introduced throughout the whole process, including through the period of adjudication of complaints. So whenever there is a room for improvement, they should request it and they will have our support and we will do our best to see that there are improvements. As I said, according to our information, many of the improvements have been already introduced.

My second recommendation to the candidates is: give a chance to due process, respect due process, respect the work of the Commissions, don't jump to conclusions, don't make statements and comments in anticipation of the results – whether partial, preliminary, etc. They would just mislead the people and that could stir up certain sentiments. So control yourself, act like responsible politicians.

The third recommendation, if you wish: there might be questions, and most likely will be, questions. But work together – the two campaigns – because it is not only about who will be the winner, it's about the country, about stability and the future of the country. So work together in addressing and finding solutions to questions or problems.

And also be ready to accept the results of the process. There can only be one winner, but it doesn't mean that the number two and their supporters should be excluded from being able to contribute to future solutions for the country.

So, hopefully, at the end of the day, when it will be clear who is the next President of the country, there will be also an agreement on how he will cooperate with the people, with the group, with the team of the second [place-getter], because this is the way for the future of the country. And I am encouraged that – indeed, if I am not wrong – both candidates have said openly that they would be ready to work after there is clarity on who is the winner, to work with the second camp, for the betterment of the country, for its stability and its future.

**AL JAZEERA ARABIC:** What if Afghan people do not participate in the elections, keeping in mind that there is a lot of observations about fraud and rigging, keeping in mind the threat of the Taliban to launch some attacks in the voting centres. What if the Afghan people did not participate, what will be the situation then?

**Ján Kubiš:** I am confident that the people of Afghanistan will take part in the elections. They showed it very clearly on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April – threats were issued, there were problems and questions. Nevertheless, the people of Afghanistan showed not only bravery but also showed themselves to be good citizens, knowing very well that it is in their hands the opportunity to shape the future of the country. They did take part and, once again, I am confident that they will take part in the elections on the 14<sup>th</sup>. So I will not go into any hypothetical scenarios because I think this will not happen.

**BERLIK TV [translated from Dari]:** My question is about the interference of foreign countries, namely the United States. As we learnt later, in past elections, some foreign diplomats had interfered with the election results. What guarantee does the United Nations provide that the foreign diplomats will not interfere in the election results?

**Ján Kubiš:** There is no US interference in the elections in Afghanistan – full stop. There is no need to prevent anything of the kind. The international community is impartial. It is interested in a good outcome for the elections. It strongly supports and hopes and encourages the people of Afghanistan to decide for themselves who should be their leader. They know what kind of programmes and what kind of future each of the two candidates is proposing for the country and who is a better guarantee for progress, stability and unity in the country, and they will display

their wisdom. There is no interference, as you mentioned the United States notably, there is no interference from the United States in the elections in this country.

Thank you.

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**United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)**  
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