



Königswinter, 5 December 2001

**PRESS BRIEFING BY MR. LAKHDAR BRAHIMI, SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR AFGHANISTAN**

AND

**MR. JOSCHKA FISCHER, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY**

Following is a near-verbatim transcript of today's briefing at 11:30 a.m. Bonn time by Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, and Mr. Joschka Fischer, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany:

Mr. Ahmad Fawzi, Spokesman for the SRSR for Afghanistan:

(inaudible) ...available on the UNIC Bonn website and that is www.uno.de.

I have great pleasure in welcoming to this press conference His Excellency the Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany. It feels rather funny to welcome the Foreign Minister in his land, but it is a great honour that he could join us here today; and a great pleasure also to welcome the leader of the UN team and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi.

May I appeal to the cameras in the front row please, in about five seconds, to either leave the front row so the people in the back can see our two guests, or kneel. Five, four, three, two, one ... cameramen, thank you very much.

I now present Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, who will make an opening statement; then after Mr. Fischer says a few words we will take your questions. Please identify yourselves clearly and wait for a microphone.

Mr. Brahimi.

Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, SRSR for Afghanistan:

Thank you very much Ahmad, it's a pleasure to be here. Ahmad has been telling me of the good time he has spent with you while we were trying to work also for you. Our conference is at last over, and as I'm sure you have gathered, it wasn't an easy one. We have achieved a successful end, we are extremely delighted about that, but the real work starts now. And the real difficulties are going to start when this Interim Administration that has been agreed upon here moves to Kabul. But as we prepare to leave Bonn, I think that Ahmad has often told you how well treated we have been here. Both Ahmad and I and the Afghans come from parts of the world where, if I may say so, we know a thing or two about hospitality, and we are really impressed by the hospitality of the German government, and we will never say thank you enough to them. Not only were we extremely well-treated on a personal basis, but I think the German government through its Foreign Minister, Foreign Ministry, the diplomats who have been with us, all the time have been very instrumental in achieving the results we are lucky to have achieved here. It is another generosity of the German government that the Chancellor attended the closing ceremony with us, and the Foreign Minister has been kind enough to honour me with his presence at my side today. So I will again thank him and ask him to speak with you.

Mr. Joschka Fischer, Minister of Foreign Affairs:

Thank you very much. I want to thank Lakhdar Brahimi, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the UN for his excellent job. I want to thank also Mr. Vendrell and the whole staff of the United Nations for what they have achieved. I think it is a very important day today, with the signature under the agreement by all the representatives of the different Afghan groups. But most of all, I want to thank the leaders of the Afghan groups. I think they achieved a lot. It's the first, but I think historical, step, which was achieved by the agreement about the transitional government. There is still a long road to go in Afghanistan, with many obstacles, but I think every journey started with a first step, but today was more than a first step. The implementation of the agreement now is

crucial; the implementation of the political structure of the transitional government; their capabilities to start with their work in Kabul; security; the humanitarian aid now with the beginning of the winter is crucial to bring food and medicine and all the other things which are needed to the people; reconstruction is not only a big challenge, but in economic and humanitarian terms and political terms a big opportunity, not only for Afghanistan, but for the whole region, and can create, if it is done in a proper way, economic perspective for the whole region, also for the neighbour countries and of course we, the Federal Republic of Germany, will engage ourselves. Traditionally we are represented in the education system in Afghanistan by schools sponsored by Germany since long, and we will again engage ourselves with our aid in the education system, and especially by sponsoring the education of Afghan women and girls.

So, all in all, we are really honoured to be the host of this conference, and we are very grateful for this success. Once again, thank you very much, and I can tell you Lakhdar Brahimi is not only successful, but also very, very tired, because he hasn't slept since 6 a.m. Tuesday morning. So please, restrict yourselves with the questions.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Ahmad Fawzi, Spokesman for the SRSG for Afghanistan:

Thank you Mr. Fischer, we'll take 25 minutes of questions. Please wait for a microphone and identify yourselves.

Question: Can you tell us that today is a historical day, would you say that? Have you doubted at any time that you would succeed in a very few days, actually nine days, to end 23 years of war, is a short time. And when did you think that you were going to succeed? Was there a very special moment that you told yourself and your team that you had it?

Answer (Mr. Brahimi): You know in situations like this, I think of all conferences, you have ups and downs, you have moments of crisis, you have moments of great hope that are followed by other moments of great frustration, and we have lived all that. Several times we thought that we were very close to concluding and it didn't work. I think it all came together this morning, about 6 a.m. I think it was.

Mr. Fawzi: Yes sir, I can testify to that. Mr. Brahimi, we started at 5:30 and we adjourned the meeting at quarter to seven.

Question: Mr. Fischer, could you please be a bit more precise about this security aspect? When do you think there might be European or German troops in Afghanistan?

Answer (Mr. Fischer): First of all we need a Security Council Resolution, based on this we will then have to decide what we will do.

Question: Dr. Brahimi, I'm wondering, do you plan on meeting with the former King in Rome before you go to Afghanistan, and on the final list, there are some names missing – can you comment on the difficulties reaching people and also on the ethnic breakdown of the list.

Answer (Mr. Brahimi): Yes, I will try to stop in Rome on my way to Afghanistan. I want to see the former King as soon as possible, and I want to see Professor Rabbani. I have spoken to Professor Rabbani several times during these ten days, and I want to go and thank him and see also how the preparation of the handover is going to take place. The names: the group of Rome are still missing a few names, which I think there is an agreement about the numbers and the slots and the positions. I think it is a matter of hours before they can hand in the missing names. The ethnic balance, no ethnic group is happy, because there are no statistics, no precise statistics and every ethnic group is absolutely certain that they are much more numerous than everybody else think. So, this is a difficulty and that is why one of the things that they have asked the UN in this document is to do a census of the population as soon as possible.

Question: I'd like to ask both Mr. Brahimi and Mr. Fischer. First Mr. Brahimi, how many jobs are outstanding still and is it true you added a thirtieth position to make this work out? And Mr. Fischer, do you think that it is important that an international security force be evident on the ground on or before December 22nd?

Answer (Mr. Brahimi): I don't know how many slots there are still; it's the Rome group that is still missing a few names. Yes, we did have to add one more position, to make the deal possible.

(Mr. Fischer): I think it's now in the hands of the United Nations. The Security Council has to make up its mind and make a decision about a resolution, and then this resolution must be implemented. I think this is now in the hands of the United Nations and I don't want to comment on any time-line, because this must be decided in New York in the Security Council.

Question: Mr. Hamid Karzai is to be the new Chairman of the Interim government, and I'd like to know if you treated directly with him during the Bonn talks and how that goes, if you can tell us a bit about how he was linked to the outcome.

Answer (Mr. Brahimi): Mr. Karzai has spoken to the conference during the opening session. We've been in touch with Mr. Karzai for quite some time now, and I have spoken to him once during these ten days, and other people have spoken to him also several times. As you know, he is inside the country, in an area which is going through very terrible times, and I hope to speak to him tonight if it's feasible.

Question: How do you expect to provide security to the government while the multinational troops are not still on the ground? And do you think that the government will be fully respected in Afghanistan? And there are only two women in the government – did you really have to fight a lot to get these only two women? Because you expected more, I think.

Answer (Mr. Brahimi): I think it's your right to expect more, but you know there were none in the recent times in Afghanistan, so it's not a bad beginning. As far as security is concerned, many of your colleagues are reporting from Afghanistan: north, south, east, west; and I think that a recurrent theme from the people of Afghanistan in their report is that they are longing for only two things: peace and security. And peace means security. And also I think there are very often reports, from Kabul and elsewhere, that say that they need help. These are very turbulent times in Afghanistan, they need help to protect the people while they try and create institutions and security forces that will provide that security for everyone.

Question: Can you say whether any special measures are being taken to protect Mr. Karzai's security, given that, as you say, he is in a dangerous region of Afghanistan and he's also a key member of this new team?

Answer (Mr. Brahimi): The simple answer is that I don't know, because he is in a place where I don't think he's easily accessible. But he tells me that he is all right, and I think that a lot of people in Afghanistan are looking after him and he thinks that he is reasonably well protected.

Question: Minister Fischer, do you have any numbers in mind for the donors' conference, a target figure of pledges or grants or loans, and what do you see as the priorities in terms of sustainable development for Afghanistan?

Answer (Mr. Fischer): I don't have any numbers to announce now because we have a conference in Berlin and I've to open this Conference not here, but in Berlin, so I have to apologise but I hope you will understand that, and secondly I think that we must now start with humanitarian aid, that is of utmost importance, but then the reconstruction. I think all the elements of a civil society. We have to reconstruct all the elements, not only the infrastructure, the education system, health care, whatever, I think is very important. The economy must restart again and also fighting against drugs is very important and closely linked to restart of the economy also in the rural areas. To restart the economy in the rural areas a demining programme will also be very important, and Germany was very active and will be very active in the future in the demining programme. I think demining is very, very important so

all these elements have to be brought together and we hope that there will be one fund, not different funds from different nations, that there will be one fund for the reconstruction in Afghanistan and – once again – we think it is a very big opportunity, an economic one, and in terms of stability for the whole region if it is well done because reconstruction also means opportunities for business in Iran, in Pakistan, in the northern neighbour states; so this can create an economic momentum which can really push forward the whole region to more stability and a more constructive future.

Question: I would like to ask of Mr. Brahimi, given the reservations that the various parties other than the Northern Alliance have expressed, about going to Kabul and setting up an Administration there while the city is still under the control of the Northern Alliance troops, are you now convinced that they will be willing to do so before international troops step in, as well as, do you think Mr. Kazai will be able to head the team on the 22nd, the scheduled date. And a question for Mr. Fischer, would you say what's been achieved here offers enough for the international community to pledge the billions that will be required to rebuild Afghanistan?

Answer (Mr. Brahimi): Yes I very much hope that Mr. Kazai can reach Kabul on time. As to the security concerns, we all have security concerns. Yet I am going there early next week. Things are moving very, very fast in Afghanistan. Kabul seemed to be reasonably well stabilised for the moment. We hope that things will improve with time and not go back to the bad old days. But the concerns are there and I think we will have to go out there and see. As I said earlier, the tough work begins now.

(Mr. Fischer): I can give you the shortest answer which is possible: Yes. But precise. (Laughter). The question was whether it is enough what is achieved now here in Petersberg for the pledging conference, the political agreement. And the answer is very short: yes.

Question: A question for Mr. Brahimi. Can you confirm how many posts each group gets and could you elaborate about the ethnic balance?

Answer (Mr. Brahimi): I'm not sure whether I can be very precise. The ethnic balance we have tried to work out here is, I think, 11 for the Pashtuns, eight for the Tajiks, five for the Hazaras, three for the Uzbeks and one or two for the others, the smaller groups. The group from Cyprus has nobody in this administration. They have signed the Agreement, they are extremely supportive, but they said that they prefer not to participate in this, they are a peace group, they will support this process 100%. But they declined to participate. I think this is what I can tell you for the moment.

Question: You mentioned that the Rome group had still to complete its names, and am I right in thinking that there are still 11 posts to be filled?

Interjection from Mr. Brahimi: For the Pashtuns, not for the Rome group.

Question (continued): Does this mean, however, that each group can propose whoever it likes to fill its posts and there can be no objection by any other group?

Answer (Mr. Brahimi): Of course there are objections by other groups but I think there are a number of names which they are playing with to see who takes what. I think that what they were saying is that they needed a few hours to complete that. There is an agreement about the names that are there, yes.

Question (continued): That means that all the names that are possible have been approved by the others?

Answer (Mr. Brahimi): Yes.

Question: Dr. Brahimi, how do you rate the co-operation of some of Afghanistan's neighbours at this Conference, particularly Pakistan and Iran?

Answer (Mr. Brahimi): In Bonn they were very cooperative, they were very supportive. They have been with us all the time. I think they arrived exactly when we did, and they are still here. They have been very cooperative. I would like to pay tribute here, I think, to a number of countries, these neighbours amongst them, but also the United

States, Great Britain, France, Germany – I'm sure I'll forget others – but these countries have been extremely helpful all the time, without interfering.

Question: In the document we read that help from the international community will be necessary to the Afghan people, which will guarantee the security in their country. I would like to know how many soldiers do you estimate will be necessary to do this job, and also to know which were the criteria of personal integrity that have been used in the Conference to select the Interim Administration members?

Answer (Mr. Brahimi): On the first question, I don't know. On the second, I think that they themselves have set this requirement. How well they have respected it, I think this is something which we will find out later.

Question: Mr. Brahimi, many Afghan leaders are outside Afghanistan and they will go back to Afghanistan. Mr. Fischer, you said 90,000 refugees live in Germany. Do you have any programme to send them back?

Answer (Mr. Brahimi): I can answer for the Minister. They have no programme for sending them back, but I think they will help those who want to go back to serve their country. The numbers, I am not sure. If you are talking about refugees, it is estimated that between Iran and Pakistan there is something like five million still there. Now, there is a lot of movement because of these last developments in Afghanistan and there are many, many people on the move. They are what is called "internally displaced". I don't know whether we have an estimate, we feel that there would be something like one million people who left the cities when they were bombarded and people who are living now in all the places where bombardment is taking place, so it is a real problem.

Answer (Mr. Fischer): There is no programme but I think the Afghan nation is a very proud nation and the international community and the United Nations are helpful. We are ready to assist in a long-term effort, but allow me to use the opportunity here to make an appeal to the experts, to the Afghan communities, to businessmen, to doctors, to professors – all of them are needed now in Afghanistan for the reconstruction of the country and of the society. I think we will co-operate with the Afghan community and find ways, because we think that Afghan experts would be the best solution for the reconstruction, for the assistance, for a new Afghanistan.

Question: On the 22nd December this new Interim Administration is going to take up its work, hopefully. Is there enough time in the United Nations institutions to work out a plan to get at least a Task Force, an international Task Force, to Kabul by that time? I am pretty aware that thousands of international soldiers cannot be deployed in Kabul within two or three weeks, or is that possible?

Answer (Mr. Brahimi): There is an assessment mission now, I think today, arriving in Islamabad and going to Afghanistan to see what are the needs and what needs to be done if the Security Council and the members of the United Nations decide to send any kind of military mission. So that work has started already on it and there is a mission which is arriving I think in Islamabad today. Now, your question is very, very technical. It all depends on what kind of force. If the will is there, if the countries want to do it, yes it can be done very, very fast. Remember how fast the Australians have been able to go to Timor. Or the Americans to Haiti. So if the will is there, I think it can be done, yes. And if the need is there also.

Question in French on whether the role envisaged for women is real or symbolic.

Answer (given by Mr. Brahimi in French then translated by him into English): Yes, women are going to play a real role I am sure, not only in the Government – the two ladies who are there, one of them is very, very active, a well-known social worker amongst the refugees and in the Hazara region; the other one is a former general in the Army; and a doctor who has never left Kabul. I think, she is still working in Kabul. More important perhaps is the fact that there is a Civil Society in Afghanistan that is very active and there are some women's organisations which are really active, militant, and doing things. That is why in a statement not long ago I challenged those who are interested in the fate of women in Afghanistan, please continue making statements, continue making appeals, let's look at the reality and help the women concretely.

You speak about education for girls. The campaign for education for girls in Afghanistan could be more extensive, but there are schools with no roof, there are schools where girls sit on the ground in this winter there – so send them tables, send them books, send them clothes. This is how you help the development of women.

Mr. Fawzi: Ladies and gentlemen, I'm afraid that's all we have time for but before we conclude I would like to give the floor to Foreign Minister Fischer.

Minister Fischer: Very briefly, first of all, I hope that you enjoyed your time here in Königswinter but before we close this Press Conference, I also want to thank the Speaker of the United Nations, Ahmad Fawzi, I think he did an excellent job. (Applause.)

Mr. Fawzi: Thank you, Mr. Fischer, I would also like to thank, with your permission, members of the press who were so patient with us, for your indulgence and your good humour and for waking me up every morning at 6am. (Laughter) We are going to miss the media boat, but I hope we see you in Kabul. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

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