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**Address of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi
Special Advisor to the Secretary-General of the United Nations
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**Symposium “Peace Building: Toward Rehabilitations of East Timor
and Afghanistan”
Co-organized by JIIA/UNU**

Introduction

1. Your Excellency President Gusmão (if attending), Madame Ogata, Ambassador Satoh, Vice Rector Thakur, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, let me say at the outset what an honour it is to return to Japan, a country that has been, and continues to be, such a generous and committed friend to Afghanistan, East Timor and so many other countries engaged in the difficult challenge of rebuilding from the ashes of war.

2. I was in Hiroshima just three months ago for another gathering of colleagues from around the world to discuss how we might improve capacity building programmes in post conflict situations. And I am most grateful for this initiative taken by the Japan Institute for

International Affairs and the United Nations University, to allow us to reflect on what has been achieved in Afghanistan and East Timor, what lies ahead, and to draw lessons from the peace-building experiences there.

3. It goes without saying that we need to learn from the past experiences in post-conflict transition, to be ready not to apply them again but to adapt them, creatively to each new challenge. All of us who hope to be of help to countries in transition from war to peace soon realize that each situation poses unique difficulties. The particular history of the conflict, local politics, the state of regional relations, ethnic and cultural dimensions, the extent of physical destruction, continuing insecurity, all these factors and many more must be taken into account, to determine what is possible and what is not. This is what I have sometimes called “navigating by sight”, but to do so, one must prepare and refine the tools at one’s disposal. So I personally look forward to learning much from all of you at this conference.

Afghanistan: Achievements thus far

4. Let me say a little bit about the achievements, the progress, in Afghanistan thus far. Whenever I am asked to judge the progress Afghanistan has made on its path to peace, the question always arises: is the glass half full or half empty? 23 years of war, the collapse of state institutions, and international neglect meant that at the beginning of the Bonn process, Afghanistan was a country that had fallen into a very deep hole. So even after two years of progress, there is so much left to be done that the glass can sometimes seem quite empty indeed.

5. Yet, if we take stock of that progress, the picture can appear much more heartening. Since December 2001, the achievements of the Afghan people under President Karzai's leadership and with international assistance are indeed remarkable. Large scale conflict was ended, a humanitarian crisis was averted, and the political timetable for transition has been kept. President Karzai's administration has overseen the articulation of a National Development Framework and the National Budget, the adoption of a new national currency, the first steps in the formation of a National Army and a National Police, and the

return to school of some 4 million boys and girls. During the same period the Independent Human Rights Commission has grown in stature and capacity throughout the country. And major strides have been made in restoring the shattered road network and power grid. Agricultural activity has also risen dramatically, playing an important part significantly contributing to the double digit GDP growth of the last two years.

6. These accomplishments – and they are only a part of the list - are also an expression of the very fruitful partnership that has been maintained between the international community and the Afghan leadership. This partnership is itself a worthy achievement, distinguished by a few characteristics of this partnership which are worth recalling here.

7. At its core was the principle of Afghan ownership over the transition process. The Bonn process vested sovereignty, from the outset, in Afghan institutions: through the six month Interim Administration, then a two year transitional administration endorsed by Afghans gathered at an Emergency Loya Jirga. After only a short period, this administration determined the priorities for development

within its own national framework, and the international community oriented itself to support those Afghan-led priorities.

8. This Afghan leadership extended to the political elements of the transition process. The recently concluded Constitutional Loya Jirga deliberated on a draft constitution prepared by an Afghan Commission, established by President Karzai and supported by an Afghan Secretariat. The same Secretariat managed the elections of Loya Jirga delegates and served the Loya Jirga itself. Certainly, international assistance remains vital in the political transition, and the UN and others have played active roles from the start. But the transitional process as a whole has seen steadily increasing Afghan management. The next stage, the much more complicated management of national elections, will see equally important, and new policy and management roles taken up by Afghans.

9. National ownership over a transition process reflects the right of people to participate in the affairs of the state and decide the course of their history. Yet in post-conflict situations, there is a potential risk, because national institutions may have become too weak to lead. My Afghan friends would be the first to admit that the institutions of

government remain weak in many areas, but with the central principle of Afghan-leadership in place, direct, operational partnerships in each sector were built between the Afghan government institutions and donor countries, and the United Nations and the International Financial Institutions. This has been another important characteristic of the effort to rehabilitate Afghanistan.

10. The ‘lead nation’ concept reflected this operational approach. With this approach, donors took individual, direct responsibility for coordinating support and assisting the programme of reform for one element of the security sector. For example, alongside the UN, Japan is ably coordinating support to the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of ex-combatants. This political and operational commitment to DDR is in addition, as it were, to the \$500 million Japan generously pledged to the peace process. Likewise, Italy is responsible for support to the Justice Sector, the United States for the army, Germany the police, and the United Kingdom for drugs control. Another example of the Afghan partnership with the international community was the Programme Secretariats, inter-ministerial bodies which brought the Government and UN agencies together to plan and

programme development assistance. Where necessary, UN agencies took a joint leadership role in the Secretariats.

11. Amongst international actors, UNAMA plays the full role devoted to the United Nations as the focal point for coordination of our joint efforts to support Afghanistan's revival. I would like, here to express my deep appreciation to all the Governments and their representatives in Kabul for the support I personally enjoyed from all of them in the fulfillment of that role.

12. I focus on the various aspects of cooperation because the relationship between the local community and their leaders on the one hand, and the international community on the other, forms the basis for success of any lasting rehabilitation and reconstruction effort. Of course the political framework varies from place to place, but we internationals must always be ready to work at it, and ready, as the newcomers to a situation, to learn from our national partners. And on the whole, I think the Afghanistan experience, in this respect, has been positive.

Challenges

13. Now, let me turn to the “half empty” part of the glass. Unfortunately, insecurity remains a threat to all of the gains I have mentioned. Insecurity in Afghanistan comes from two sources – the extremism of those who wish to use violence to block the peace process, and the daily abuses by factional commanders and their men who prey on the local communities, and defy the rule of law and the writ of the central government. In the long run, it is probably the latter that threatens the peace in Afghanistan most. The threat from extremist Taliban, Al-Qaeda and others is certainly serious, and much more needs to be done by the international community and Afghanistan’s neighbours to help stop it. But in the end, the people of Afghanistan do not suffer from this threat nearly so much as they do at the hands of local commanders, who choke off the local economy, extort money from trade, boost the cultivation of drugs, and act as a law unto themselves.

14. This is one reason why security sector reform is so vital. The table must be cleared of all the armed factions, so that a loyal, unified national army and police can protect Afghans and uphold the law. And the army and police, along with the Ministries that command them, will

need to be seen as truly national, rather than factionally dominated, if they are to replace the factionalised forces that continue to plague the land. Disbanding the factional structures will depend on successful DDR. Thus, the disarmament and demobilization of the factions and the building of a national army and police are really part and parcel of the same effort.

15. This reform process is underway, and the recent appointment of a new, reform-minded Chief of Intelligence is a very good sign. But the national reform effort will take time. And in the interim, international security assistance is needed to push DDR and security reforms forward and protect the political process. That is why we have called repeatedly for the expansion of the now NATO-led ISAF forces, and though this is at last underway, I fear the pace and scale of it may not be enough. From the start, the Afghan peace process has not been accompanied by dedicated international assistance at all levels, and this has been a challenge that we were not able to fully overcome.

16. The government's efforts to expand its authority have also stumbled on the hurdle of factional influence and insecurity. Without loyal local police, capable district administrators, working courts -

without the levers of government - the central government's writ often seemed limited to Kabul. This has been another critical gap in the transition process. Resolving it depends on DDR and security sector reform, but also on improvements in the civil service and other interventions to create better government at the local level. Through trial and some error, we have found that this calls for simultaneous assistance and intervention in many sectors.

17. Put in trained administrators, rebuild their offices and help provide logistics, remove corrupt police officers and bring in newly trained and loyal police, ensure there is a court with a trained judge, implement reconstruction projects at the same time to help solidify the new administration in the community. The Government, the UN and others were attempting many such programmes at different times, in different places. But in fact they are interdependent. Any one, without the rest, may fail if the overall climate is one of insecurity and weak government. Together, their effects are magnified. The lesson here is that a good government is an integrated system. Where conflict has weakened it across all sectors, the repair must also be integrated.

18. Improved security, the capacity to enforce the rule of law, and effective local government are all necessary tools to address the scourge of drugs that threatens Afghanistan. The Minister of Finance has warned that Afghanistan could become a “narco-state” if the \$2billion poppy economy is allowed to continue to grow and dwarf the legal economy and undermine the progress in rehabilitating Afghanistan so far. This is a critical challenge with implications both for the success of Afghanistan’s peace process and the public health and national security of drug consuming countries of the West. The Government plans to eradicate 15% or more of the poppy crop this year, and will need continued assistance to build up the institutions to fight it.

19. Likewise, bringing life to the new constitution of Afghanistan will also depend in good measure on improvements in the security situation and expanding the authority of the central government. The fact that Afghans reached agreement on the new Constitution is a great accomplishment but ultimately, the test of each element of the Bonn process will be whether or not Afghanistan is moved forward, towards what I sometimes have referred to as the “irreversibility” of peace. From this perspective, the new constitutional order will only have meaning for the average Afghan if security improves, the rule of law is

strengthened and the government becomes an institution that serves the people.

The Way Ahead

20. I hope you will forgive me if I have painted too negative a picture. In Kabul I was often chided by my Afghan and international colleagues for seeing too much of the empty glass. Certainly, the way ahead has its challenges. Nevertheless, the Constitutional Loya Jirga has ushered in an era of new potential - it has brought us to a new phase. Political mobilization is now visible in many areas of the country thought to be much more disaffected. There is new momentum towards the selection of leaders by Afghans in anticipation of the electoral process to come.

21. What relationship might there be between this new political phase and the rehabilitation and reconstruction effort? I have often said in the past that the transitional government, for all its very real accomplishments, suffered from a lack of representativeness. Its key ministries are disproportionately dominated by the Panjshiri group of the Northern Alliance, leaving the government as a whole with a narrow political base. The prospect of elections brings with it the offer of

broadening that political base and increasing the standing of the government further. With more authority and legitimacy there will be an opportunity for the Afghan Government, after the elections, to address the unresolved issues that have dogged the process so far – factional influence, lack of DDR, limited reform of the security institutions, expanding the writ of the government and the rule of law and the control of drugs.

22. An elected government will have a greater chance of achieving this only if the elections are credible - elections that translate into increased state authority that can be harnessed to leap forward in terms of the challenges I have mentioned. This means continued commitment up, through and beyond the elections from the international community both in terms of finances and security support. And it means commitment from the Government to address further some of the gaps in reforms that continue to worry Afghans.

23. The international conference on Afghanistan planned for 31 March and 1 April in Berlin is the perfect opportunity to crystallize this commitment, and to reach a consensus on the political agenda that must be followed, and the financial support needed to achieve it. There is a

pattern we are all aware of, a pattern of diminishing interest in post-conflict transitions after a year or two. I sincerely hope the conference will show a different pattern, a readiness to complete the tasks the people of Afghanistan and we together have taken up in 2001, when we were determined never again to allow the sort of neglect and isolation that befell it.

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