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HARPER-KARZAI-SCHEFFER PANEL

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UNIDENTIFIED: I would now like to ask Prime Minister Harper, President Karzai and our Moderator, Lise Doucet, to come forward and join the Secretary General. Thank you very much. We're looking forward to a very interesting discussion

HAMID KARZAI (President of Afghanistan): All right, we'll leave this here.

JAAP DE HOOP SCHEFFER (Secretary General, NATO): Once again, Mr. President.

HAMID KARZAI: Hi, good speech. Tremendously good.

MODERATOR: Hello and welcome to this panel that's been organized by the German Martial Fund and also the Chatham House International Royal Institute of International Affairs of Britain. My name is Lise Doucet. I'm a council member of Chatham House. I'm a BBC presenter and correspondent and I am a Canadian. (LAUGHTER, APPLAUSE) Yes, my biggest achievement is just being born. Why have we gathered here today? To consider a critical question: NATO in Afghanistan, success not in sight, failure is not an option. Now, yesterday Craig Kennedy, when he opened this Bucharest conference, said, "We have to succeed in Afghanistan. We have to." Is that an article of faith? As US Military Generals like to say, hope is not a strategy. What does success mean? Well, for NATO it's being described as nothing less, as a critical test, if not the test, of NATO resolve, if not its relevance as a 21st century fighting force. It is, as many of you know, the Alliance's biggest ground operation in its history, and in 2001, when NATO invoked article five of the Washington Treaty, it was the first time it

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had done so, all for one and one for all. 2008, is the United States, Canada and Europe still fighting the same war in Afghanistan? What does success mean? What does success mean for Afghans? What does success mean for the President of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai? Welcome to the Bucharest conference.

HAMID KARZAI: Thank you very much. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: President Karzai knows a lot, perhaps too much, about the successes and failures in his country. He was part of the Mujahideen war against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. He was a Deputy Foreign Minister in the Mujahideen government that came to power. He has led Afghanistan since 2001 and the ousting of the Taliban, and since 2004, he is an elected president. What does that mean? It mean he has to be accountable to these students who came all the way from Afghanistan if they are voting age. He has to face his Defence Minister, his national security advisor and his Foreign Minister and his economic advisor, all of whom have come here. So he also wants to know whether or not this mission is going to succeed and what Afghans have to do to help it succeed.

Prime Minister Harper also knows about winning. He likes to win. I'm told that when he graduated from high school in Canada his grade point average was 95.7. Well, unfortunately the arithmetic in the Canadian Parliament isn't quite so good. He came to power in 2006 and has been heading a minority government in Canada, and I think it's fair to say you have sometimes gambled your career and your party's political standing on the mission in Afghanistan. But Canadian Parliament has just said Canadian troops, more than 2500, can stay 'til 2011 as long as they get support. But will they get this support?

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Jaap de Hoop Scheffer. Well, in 2003 in September, I had the good fortune to be outside the UN headquarter in New York, and I got a call from the BBC and they said they've just appointed the new Secretary General for NATO. And I said, "Well, who is it?" And they said, "Jaap... Ja...Skef...Schef... The Dutch Foreign Minister." I said, yes. (LAUGHTER) I said, well, and I turned around and I said, "Well, he's just standing right next to me here in New York." So I went up and interviewed him as the Dutch Foreign Minister and I said, "Well, what will be your priorities when you take over as NATO Secretary General?" And he said, "The success of the mission in Afghanistan will be the litmus test for the success of NATO." And he says that to this day.

Now, I'm told also that you're not a silent audience. You haven't come here just to hear from our illustrious group of panellists, but you're going to have lots of questions. Why don't we nail our colours to the mast? How many of you sitting here today believe that the NATO mission in Afghanistan is actually winning, it's succeeding? How many of you think it's losing? Oh! How many think, as some do, that actually it's not winning, but it's not losing either? Great. Well, we can't guarantee the success of the mission in Afghanistan, but let's hope at least for a successful panel discussion today. Let me begin with you, President Karzai. 2001, world leaders stood beside you and said, "We will stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Afghanistan. We are with you for the long run." You come to Bucharest. They're worried about a hundred troops here, a hundred troops there, how long will they stay, "well, I'm worried about my government." Are you worried? Does it leave you uneasy that the resolve may not be enough to tackle the formidable problems in your country?

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HAMID KARZAI: Thank you my friend, Lise, thank you very much. I'm glad you took a vote here, and it demonstrated once again that success is there. So according to this vote, I would change the heading. I would say, "success is in sight; of course failure is not an option". Saying this, in 2001 when the international community came to Afghanistan and liberated Afghanistan, I don't know if it sends you the message that I have, the liberation of Afghanistan. Afghanistan was a country that was no longer in the hands of its people. Afghanistan was ruled from the (inaudible) of Afghanistan. Afghanistan was in the hands of terrorists. Afghanistan was in the hands of tyranny, worst of all. Now, the arrival of the international community, led by the United States and helped by the countries around Afghanistan as well, brought liberation to Afghanistan. That is a major, great success. After liberation, the international community began to rebuild Afghanistan, rebuild the state of Afghanistan, rebuild the political institutions of Afghanistan, rebuild the economy of Afghanistan, rebuild the infrastructure of Afghanistan, rebuild the security institutions of Afghanistan. Let's count as to which one of these have we achieved.

MODERATOR: Well, let's, no, let's first get to the question, which is are you worried about the continuing resolve?

HAMID KARZAI: I'm coming to that.

MODERATOR: We're going to get to the successes in a minute.

HAMID KARZAI: No, I have to be fair to the international community, so I'll have to come to (inaudible)...

MODERATOR: Yes, well, we have lots of chance, but yes, but let's...

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HAMID KARZAI: Ok.

MODERATOR: Have you come here an uneasy president?

HAMID KARZAI: Fine, fine. Now, since you all know what we have achieved, and I'll come to that crucial point...

MODERATOR: Yeah, we'll come to the achievements later.

HAMID KARZAI: ...we in Afghanistan are very grateful to the international community for having brought us liberation first, and then for having helped us build all those institutions and have reconstruction and have roads and schools and return of 4.5 million refugees and countless other achievements. I'm very grateful and I'm sure they will stay with us because the tough part is over. The next is the continuation of this journey, which we will complete together.

MODERATOR: And you're sure Afghans want them to stay.

HAMID KARZAI: Absolutely.

MODERATOR: Ok. Prime Minister Harper, you threw down the gauntlet. You said Canadians would stay but we need help. So you've come to Bucharest, you're hoping to get a commitment of a thousand troops, a battle group, plus some aerial drones, some helicopters, some vehicles as well, light armoured vehicles. You thought you had it. Nicolas Sarkozy announced in London that there would be a thousand troops going to Afghanistan. His Prime Minister yesterday said, "Well, actually, it'll be a few hundred, and most of them will be in Kabul." Are you a worried Prime Minister now?

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RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER (Prime Minister of Canada): No, I'm not worried. I'm very optimistic that we will achieve our objectives. When we had the last summit at Riga, it was, you know, widely declared afterward a failure because we and other countries, Secretary General had gone and said we needed troop commitments. Well, we didn't have greater troop commitments at the summit, but if you look at the two years following the summit, we got significantly enhanced troop commitments in the south. By our calculations, we have twice as many countries now supplying twice as many troops as we did in 2006. Now, obviously our timelines are shorter...

MODERATOR: You've got a year. You've got a year.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Our timelines are shorter. We need a partner in Afghanistan that will deliver, you know, around about a thousand troops, and we need to procure the equipment, which is ultimately our responsibility, although we need some help to get it on the timelines we need it on. I'm very optimistic. Whether we achieve it at this summit or in the weeks to come, we've had good discussions with our allies, and let's remember here, our objective...

MODERATOR: But how can you optimistically give...

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: ...if I can be...no, if I can be clear here for a second...

MODERATOR: ...if the French promised...

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: ... if I can be clear here for a second, our objective is not simply to procure these troops for ourselves. It's to also make sure there continues to be enhanced NATO participation so that we are successful across Afghanistan. So, you know, whether the French

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send troops to a particular province or whether the French send troops, more troops that allows other troops to be deployed to help us, it's all the same to us. What we want to make sure is that we get our partner and also that the overall NATO mission is enhanced, not detracted by our demands.

MODERATOR: But it's not very encouraging, is it, if there's already a French wobble in the course of less than a week. Sarkozy says one thing in London, and another thing is said in the French Parliament.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, we'll see what the French ultimately decide, but in fairness, the French have made no commitment to us...

MODERATOR: What have they told you?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: No, they have made no commitment to us. And Mr. Sarkozy has made no ironclad commitment to NATO. I think anything that France does over and beyond what it's already doing is a victory, and is a significant step forward, and I think increased French engagement of any number in any province is a good development of this summit.

MODERATOR: We understand that George Bush has told you personally that they will help you, either way. Wherever the French go, the Americans will send some troops down to the south to help you in Kandahar. Do you have what's being reported as an ironclad commitment from Washington?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, I make it a habit never to speak on behalf of other people.

MODERATOR: But for you...

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RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: We've had good discussions with our allies and I am convinced that we will achieve our objectives and achieve it in a way that causes the overall level of troop commitment to Afghanistan to be increased, not merely shifted laterally.

MODERATOR: Has George Bush promised you that whatever happens...

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: I say, you'll have to ask Mr. Bush what his position is.

MODERATOR: But you actually feel now that you will get a commitment?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: We're very confident.

MODERATOR: What does this show you, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer? The US Defence Secretary, Mr. Gates, warned that NATO risks becoming a two-tier alliance. He said, "We must not develop in that way," and many are saying actually it is, to all intents and purposes, a two-tier alliance, that the whole idea that everything has to be on consensus doesn't work when you come to Afghanistan because in fact many of the NATO members have different ideas about what the mission is about and what they are ready to commit for political, legislative reasons.

JAAP DE HOOP SCHEFFER: I don't think that the consensus principle has ever harmed NATO or prevented NATO from acting. I mean, consensus is a sacred principle in NATO and we should keep it. That's remark number one. Remark number two is that, and I side with Prime Minister Harper, if you see that now for instance in the south where the going gets very tough and the Canadian contingent, which is doing a great job in Kandahar province, knows all about that, with all the fatalities involved, that

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we have 14 nations in the south, one-four, that we have all the 26 NATO allies in Afghanistan; I do not see a two-tier alliance, to be quite honest. I do see, from time to time, and I have to be a realist from time to time – not always – I do see that certain governments are bound, as you say, by parliamentary mandates, which create lines which are difficult to cross. I think, let me say, there's also (inaudible) is a bit unfair always to discuss Germany. Germany is a major troop contributor and I'm a realist as NATO Secretary General. I have to be. If I want to have the forces with the limitations, with the caveats, or no forces at all, my choice is for the forces. But as long as I'm NATO Secretary General, and I've often discussed this with Prime Minister Harper and President Karzai, I'll make my continued pleas, we should get rid of our caveats. Because it is necessary that we all share the same burden. But given the fact that we now have 47 000 troops in Afghanistan, 14 nations in the south, all of them actively involved, some in a very active way, if you look at the number of the population, then I do not see a two-tier alliance. I don't.

MODERATOR: Do you actually see that it is a possibility that those caveats – I understand there's about 50 caveats that are now operating in Afghanistan, and they don't operate in other places, I understand, including Kosovo. Will...do you ever foresee that they would ever be eliminated? Or is it a fact of life in NATO?

JAAP DE HOOP SCHEFFER: There has never been a military operation in history without caveats. Never. But we can do with less caveats in Afghanistan. I mean, that has been my mantra; it still is. I'm going to continue to make pleas for less limitations and less caveats, how complicated that politically might be for nations. Because the less caveats we have, the more efficient and effective a military commander can be, and I add

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that it is an important element, political solidarity in the alliance. What is at the heart of the debate with Prime Minister Harper in Canada? It's this element. It is a nation which has suffered a lot of fatalities. We all have to fight from time to times critical public opinion, so I'll fight that fight in the bureaucratic, political sense, with Prime Minister. I do it with President Karzai and with others. But I do not see a two-tier alliance. That is really not the case.

MODERATOR: But there is...it's not just a caveat problem, it's also a political problem. When Nicolas Sarkozy came back from London, he faced the wrath of the Socialists who said, "We don't want to be part of an American agenda. We don't want to be in a war that's unpopular because it's fought," as they would see it, "with American tactics. We don't want to send more troops." It's said that Angela Merkel doesn't actually want to have a debate in Germany about this because she also worries about her leftist rivals in the German Parliament. She worries about members of her own coalition, because they actually have a culture in Germany that does not want to be putting its troops on the front line, very different to what the Americans are discussing, which is part of their global war on terror.

JAAP DE HOOP SCHEFFER: That is a bit unfair. Of course there is a distinction to be made between the United States of America as a global power and Germany as a very important power, but not a global one. But it is not true. Germany has also suffered fatalities in Afghanistan. What is important is that political leaders, and we are of that type as we're sitting here on stage, that goes for President Karzai, for Prime Minister Harper, who has finally realized in Canada, against the very critical public opinion and the same goes for Chancellor Merkel, that there are thousands of German

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forces in Afghanistan, that there is an enormous Canadian presence in Afghanistan, so those political leaders show that they lead and they have to lead, because public opinion, from time to time, you're right, is critical. But that is not a reason to give up, and I'm telling you, no ally is giving up.

MODERATOR: But that's not the point. Because of course they're there, and many other nations are there, but the disagreement is on what they will do in Afghanistan. And if the need now is for more fighting troops, if that is one of the critical...actually this is what Mr. Harper would like, more fighting troops down in the south, then you do have a two-tier arrangement, because certain countries will do certain things – we're not questioning their commitment to be in Afghanistan. We're questioning what they're willing to do there.

JAAP DE HOOP SCHEFFER: I still don't agree with you, Lise. I still don't agree, for the simple reason that first of all, the answer in Afghanistan at the end of the day is not a military one. It's called development. It's called reconstruction. For development and reconstruction to take place, we need military force, and unfortunately we need combat from time to time, because there are spoilers, as the President and I used to call them. They don't want to see reconstruction. So we need military forces, yes, and I'll not be happy and satisfied until we have filled for the full 100 percent what our military advisors tell us and tell the nations to deliver. And we have not yet delivered that. I think we're going to make progress in Bucharest, but we have not delivered that. But let us realize – and that is the reason that tomorrow we'll see President Karzai, Secretary Ban Ki-Moon and all the others. The final answer is not a military one. It is a long-term commitment by the international community, spearheaded by the United Nations, the

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European Union, the G8, major donors, under Afghan ownership and under Afghan leadership. That is the question.

MODERATOR: President Karzai, do you think there needs to be more NATO troops in Afghanistan, that the military side of it has to be boosted if there is to be success?

HAMID KARZAI: Well, first of all since you spoke about Canada and Canada is present in Afghanistan, let me...and in front of the Canadian audience, thank the people of Canada for all that they have done for us. A lot of us can't imagine what is it that Canada has achieved in Afghanistan, with the sacrifice of their men and women in service, with millions of dollars of Canadian resources coming to Afghanistan. So, Mr. Prime Minister, once again, I'm very, very grateful for what you have done. Having said this, Afghanistan need to keep growing in development. Afghanistan needs to complete the rebuilding of its institutions, including the security institutions, the military and the police. Afghanistan needs to continue to reform its judiciary. Afghanistan needs to raise its capacity. Afghanistan needs to raise the standard of living of its people. Afghanistan needs to do a lot of things that you can't imagine in the rest of the world. In other words, we have started from scratch, from zero, and we have moved six years on. We need years to move ahead. In order for us to achieve that, we need the continuous presence and support and backing and (inaudible) of the international community in Afghanistan. That would require a military presence in order for today to fight against terrorism, and in order for that security presence to boost the Afghan security institutions. And it also needs in economic side, for Afghanistan to develop through the help of the international community. So, for some time to come, Afghanistan will depend

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on the international community for all that it needs to achieve. For us, of course, as the Afghan people, and also for the larger interest, security interest of the international community. So yes to your question.

MODERATOR: And what do you say to governments in NATO, non-NATO members who are helping your country who say, "President Karzai, we want very much to help Afghanistan, but we need a more effective government. We need you to crack down on corruption. We need you to put better governors. We feel that it's not working the way it should."

HAMID KARZAI: Very true, very true.

MODERATOR: What do you say to them as they are saying to you?

HAMID KARZAI: That's very true. That's exactly also the demand of the Afghan people. That's exactly the need of the hour in Afghanistan. As I mentioned earlier, we started from nothing, and we have grown in six years beyond our imaginations in real terms from that point of having nothing. Therefore, Afghanistan needs to raise its capacity, both in civilian and military sides. Afghanistan needs to deliver all the services that any normal society would need: a clean government, an efficient government, a clean judiciary, an efficient judiciary, the provision of proper services, justice, human rights, the promotion and strengthening of democracy, the building of the institutions, 'til Afghanistan is properly entrenched in the objectives that it has and the achievements that it has. That's the right demand, and that's what we should legitimately be doing for Afghanistan.

MODERATOR: And not succeeding so far, is that a capacity problem? You don't have the resources, a country emerging from 25

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years of war, one of the poorest countries in the world still. Or is it a political problem, that there are people that you can't move against for political reasons? You're, I understand, a man who wants to be elected president again when the elections take place I think at the end of this year. Or is it a political problem, that your hands are tied?

HAMID KARZAI: It continues to be more of a capacity problem, less of a political problem. When we started, it was both a political problem and a capacity problem. As we have moved on for the past six years, we have reduced the political handicaps that we had, we have added to the political strength of the government, the legitimacy of the state; it's more now a question of capacity, and the more we add to that, the more our ability to address the difficulties of the Afghan people.

MODERATOR: Prime Minister Harper, I know Canada has been a leader in this approach to development, which is the three Ds, defence, diplomacy and development, but your critics in Canada say actually it's tilted too much. You look at Kandahar, you look at your provisional reconstruction team, the PRT, there's 350 military, five, Foreign Affairs, six from the Canadian Development Agency and ten from other civilian agencies. So the critics say it's tilted. Are you...does this need to be addressed? Is there lessons now for your involvement?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, we've accepted the judgement for some time that we would like to, you know, we would like to tilt it more towards development and governance. That all said, first of all, I'm not sure you would measure that by the number of personnel. By definition...

MODERATOR: It's just one indication, yes.

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RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: ...military engagement is labour intensive. But look, I think the most important thing (inaudible) [THE FOLLOWING AUDIO PORTION WAS MISSING FROM THE RECORDED TRANSMISSION FROM ROMANIA—WE HAVE INSERTED IT BY GOING TO THE TELEVISED CONFERENCE FROM CBC NEWSWORLD] **is you have to take a holistic approach. You can't actually support—uh separate these things. You can't say one day, in a place like Kandahar, which has a difficult security environment, we're going to do more in development so we're going to send in a bunch of un-aided arm workers (sic) into a dangerous area, that's not, that's simply not an option. But obviously we do want to, as we're going forward, have more and more emphasis on development. The way we need to achieve that is by having success on the military side. What is success on the military side?** [END OF MISSING AUDIO PORTION] success on the military side. I think it's important that we understand what this is. You know, you ask the Secretary General about increasing troop levels. Yes, we need increasing troop levels, but we do not believe that the ultimate success on the military side is that NATO will increase troop levels until the point where we snuff out the resistance. That's not realistic. What success is realistically is yes, we'll build up our troop levels, but we will also mentor and train the Afghan forces so they are ultimately able to manage the security environment going forward, manage it, not necessarily eliminate the insurgency. Afghanistan's had...this country, as you know, has had civil war for 30 years. I think it's unrealistic to think we're going to eliminate all violent conflict of all kinds in the space of two or three years. But if we can mentor the Afghan forces so they can increasingly take the lead, and then allow the international

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community to focus on development and allow, of course, the Afghan government to improve governance, I think that's our definition of mid-term success.

MODERATOR: Do you think that will be achieved by 2011, which is your...if you (inaudible)...

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: That is our objective. That was part of the resolution we passed in Parliament. We always start these things with determination that we will meet...we will meet our benchmarks. President Karzai has told me he believes this can be done in Kandahar. That's what we're working towards. And look, I think part of the problem with any military operation, especially a difficult one as we have in Kandahar and as NATO has throughout Afghanistan, unless at some point you establish some timelines and some objectives, you're not going to meet them. We all know that these military engagements, by definition, tend to have mission creep that just go on and on and on. So we've set some defined benchmarks and we will do our best to achieve those, at least to show substantial progress in relatively short order.

MODERATOR: But there are some leaders, including former Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain, your own military chief General Hillier has basically come out and said bluntly, it will take a generation. Let's be honest. That to actually put Afghanistan to right, after 25 years of war, it will take a generation. It won't be the exit dates that the Dutch, the Canadians, the British had put on it. It will actually take the long run. That, to me, doesn't seem to be happening either in Canada or other countries. Just what is involved?

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RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: I think it depends on what you mean by "success". I say, if you took the definition of "success", which could be Afghan forces able to ensure a, you know, a western equivalent security environment, maybe that's a 20-25 year task. If you're saying Afghan forces able to manage the day-to-day security in most of the country, we think that's an objective that if we put our...if we put our focus and determination towards it is achievable in much shorter timeframe. That way you'd still have western troops in the country, you would still have a security situation managed, but it would be different than now, and we've seen, you know, we're not pulling these objectives out of midair. We have seen in our sector significant improvements in the size and fighting capacity of the Afghan forces over the past couple of years.

MODERATOR: Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, are we going to see at one point will be made public your new military political document, "A New Strategy For Afghanistan"? It's now an internal document. Will we find out what your benchmarks are? What actually...what is your new strategy if this is going to start having greater traction, greater success?

JAAP DE HOOP SCHEFFER: I don't know if you're going to find out what all our benchmarks are. I very much doubt that. But what we are doing here at the Bucharest summit is first of all, agree on what we call that vision document as I mentioned in my short speech, which is a sort of commitment, because that is very much supported by the non-NATO troop contributors, and I know, for instance, from my talks with President Karzai that he also considers this a useful and good document. We have an underlying document, which is an internal document, which in Prime Minister Harper's words tell us what we have to do, what we have to achieve. But let's

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not make...that was a slight criticism, if you allow me, I had on your analysis. It will take, I think, even more than a generation to bring a nation which the Taliban had brought back to the middle ages in 2001, the middle ages – I think, Mr. President, I'm not exaggerating, apart from being the worst human rights violators – to the middle ages. If you look at Afghanistan in '01, you look at Afghanistan in 2008, I don't hesitate to say that we have made remarkable progress. It doesn't mean that the challenges are huge, because it is a big nation. It is, as far as infrastructure is concerned, terrain, stunningly beautiful, but complicated. Because if a farmer wants to bring his products to the market, you need roads, and we have to build roads, and there are not roads everywhere. So it's a huge challenge. Development cooperation, I think, as we know from Africa and elsewhere, takes more than a generation. But what we are...what we're aiming, of course, to achieve is that we can slowly, and I say this will not happen overnight, we can slowly build a situation where we have to rely less on military force, more on the Afghan National Army with the international community in a supporting and supportive role. I can tell you, Prime Minister (inaudible) will correct me when I'm wrong, that we see a big number of operations going on in Afghanistan where the Afghan army is in the lead. (Inaudible) in Helmand, I was there a few weeks ago, is one of the examples. So the more successful we are in training and equipping the Afghan National Army, the more you'll see us gradually in a supporting role. But developing a nation, rebuilding a nation from the middle ages, will take perhaps more than a generation. It might take two generations.

MODERATOR: But President Karzai, do you think they are actually involving your government, your security forces at the pace and at the level they should be? General Wardak, your Defence Minister who's here,

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has been saying, "You need to involve us more. We need more equipment. We need better training, more quick training, more of it." Do you think actually that, as the saying went, that Afghans are actually in the driving seat, they're not just the taxi driver taking directions from the person sitting behind them?

HAMID KARZAI: Well, the international community has helped us rebuild ourselves. In the particular case of the security forces, the army and the police, the army began to have attention in 2003. That attention has been steadily building up. The police was late in getting attention, and the police as such has a longer journey to complete. While we are asking for more support to Afghan security institutions and the proper training, and the proper numbers, and the proper equipment, we are extremely grateful for what has already been delivered to Afghanistan. So thank you very much. Give us more. (LAUGHS)

MODERATOR: But do they treat you as a sovereign government? There has been...there has been tensions between Afghanistan, the Afghan government and the international community about where the... you know, who should be running it, who gives the orders, who's doing a good job or a bad job.

HAMID KARZAI: Well, as far as the political sovereignty of Afghanistan is concerned, it's absolute, as any other nation. As far as the partnership of Afghanistan in day-to-day affairs is concerned, Afghanistan lacks capacity; the international community has capacity. This relationship is increasingly a balanced relationship. We have our voice. We have our concerns. We have our demands. The international community has

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their concerns, their issues and their demands, and there is a proper constructive engagement on this.

MODERATOR: Those are...

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: If I could just maybe, Lise, add...

MODERATOR: Yes, yeah.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: You know, on the three Ds that you talk about, on the defence side, the security side, obviously NATO's presence is critical today. We hope it will be less critical in the near future. In the case of development, I think the international presence will be critical ongoing, but you know, all along I think we start with a premise, all NATO countries, that only Afghanistan can govern itself. We can't provide governance. And I think one of the things we're going to have to wrestle with as we go forward, when we talk about issues – you talked a moment ago about issues of politics, kind of, you know, in a derogatory way. Afghanistan's going to have its politics, just as the rest of us have our politics, and we're going to have to get used to the fact, particularly if we have a democratic system there, it's going to be messy, it's going to be vibrant, and it's going to produce decisions from time to time that we don't agree with or are not comfortable with, and we're nevertheless going to have to work with the government of Afghanistan to manage those situations going forward, and that's just the reality, and I think it's a reality we're already starting to see on a few fronts.

HAMID KARZAI: Very well said, very true. Thank you.

MODERATOR: There you have a few of the thoughts of three key players when it comes to the NATO mission in Afghanistan. Let's

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just also remind ourselves, put a bit more context into this discussion, last year three major reports came out from the United States, including one from the Atlantic Council, who was headed by none other, the former Supreme Commander of NATO that is known quite well here, General Jim Jones, who said, "Make no mistake about it: NATO is failing in Afghanistan. And if something isn't done quickly, if there isn't urgent action, the relevance, the future of the NATO mission is at stake." And he warned about the possibility of a failed state in Afghanistan itself. There's also been a recently...a report that was issued by 90 non-governmental agencies working in Afghanistan in the aid sector, who said that \$25 billion had been committed to Afghanistan, but only \$15 billion of that had actually been given to Afghanistan, and that 40 percent of the money actually went back to the donor countries because it had been either spent on consultants' salaries or went into profits. And on the ground, last year was the worst year of violence in Afghanistan. Depending on whose figures you look at, anywhere from 6500 to 8000; about a third of those were civilians. Suicide bombings in Afghanistan, which were zero in 2002, were actually 228 last year. And as President Karzai and the students and the other Afghans who have come here, they occur with all too much frequency. There are a whole number of issues that we can go, and I want to bring...there's the issue of Pakistan, there's the issues of drugs, there's the issue of coordination between the international community, both military, civilian and the Afghan government, and we're going to have to touch on those as we continue with our debate, but I'm going to open it now to some of your questions. So please say who you are and who you would like to address your question to. No long statements please. The gentleman raising his hand.

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QUESTION: I have a question...I have a question for the Secretary General and for Prime Minister Harper. Secretary General, you talked about the reluctance of the public opinion in Germany and in Canada and very likely in some other nations. Is it a question of A, the public doesn't understand why are we there? Is it a question of B, it's such a complicated mission that we don't see the end of the road? Or is it C, the question of the fact that the public is not informed on what are we doing in Afghanistan? Which from all these three is probably the most important issue for the public? What can we do more to educate our public in order that the reluctance of the public opinion is not translated into the reluctance of putting more resources into this operation?

JAAP DE HOOP SCHEFFER: Multiple choice, Ambassador. Well, politics is, from time to time, too complicated for multiple choice, but I'll answer you seriously of course. I think first of all it is not easy to bring the notion that we in the NATO alliance are defending what we consider our core values, not anymore in the (inaudible) when I grew up to keep the Soviet Union out of Europe, but at the Hindu Kush. That is more complicated than it was when I grew up. Why is it more complicated? Perhaps because there is a certain – how shall I phrase this? – a certain easy feeling in many of our, the allied nations that the major conflicts the world has seen will never return, and that it is not anymore necessary to defend those core values. That's my point number one. I think we should watch against relativism in this regard. Secondly, and that is something I should and we should do better, we should in this regard try to bring this discussion from the conference table to the kitchen table. I'm quoting Kai Eide, known to you and to me, and Kai is now, to my great joy, the high representative of the United

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Nations in Kabul. And Kai Eide said, and he's right, "If we do not succeed in bringing this discussion to the kitchen table," and that's definitely not here, I say with all due respect for ourselves as we are sitting here, but to bring it to the kitchen table, really to try to explain to people, and there I think we could do better, Ambassador, quite honestly. What is at stake in Afghanistan that if we fail there – and we are not failing, we are prevailing, Lise, because the fact that you mentioned suicide attacks and IEDs, that's fine, but that's not the signal of strength of our opponents. And the large majority of those IEDs and suicide attacks occurs on a relatively small part of Afghan territory. I see the President nodding in the affirmative.

HAMID KARZAI: Absolutely.

JAAP DE HOOP SCHEFFER: So that is point number one. Also, let me be a bit more frank. The fact that many of our nations are not used to it anymore, that their boys and their girls are dying for this cause, that is a shock in public opinion every time, and quite rightly. It is not easy for Prime Minister Harper or for the Dutch Prime Minister or for the President to go to Parliament, to go to public opinion and explain why Canada has suffered so many fatalities. For what? For defending those universal values. For realizing that if we can't get this right, they'll come to us. And they have come to us. So Afghanistan is a matter of helping the Afghan people, but we are also on one of the front lines in a fight against terrorism. And perhaps that notion is not strong enough, that second part. Having said that, we should not make it too easy for ourselves. It is a matter for national leaders like President Karzai, Prime Minister Harper. It's a matter for the NATO allies and for the NATO Secretary General as well to explain this, and I think we have to do a

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better job. But it will not convince me that the alternative is in any way viable, because it is not.

MODERATOR: And this vision statement that you're going to put out, you talked about, that is meant to convince a sceptical public about the mission in Afghanistan. It's meant to argue what is the case for Afghanistan, a three-page document...?

JAAP DE HOOP SCHEFFER: Yes, indeed. Such a document supported by NATO allies, by NATO partners, supported by the Afghan government will not do the trick. I have not that illusion. But it is a reconfirmation of what is at stake for the international community.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: I'll answer the question as well, but I...before I begin, Lise, I'll just also add to what the Secretary General said about the statistic on IEDs and suicide bombings. This is worrisome. That said, the comparison we make in Kandahar is that in 2006, we were in conventional firefights with the Taliban. Now they wouldn't dare risk that situation. They have been so weakened, they are actually resorting to an increasing number of asymmetrical attacks. Not good, but an indication, actually, that the security situation from our point of view is actually improved, or at least our control of the situation has improved. If I can answer the question about public opinion, first of all, I think what was interesting as we went through the debate in Canada about public opinion is there was an assumption that public opinion was very split between those who were for the mission and those who were against the mission. In fact, I think as the debate unfolded and we drilled down in that public opinion, we found it was a little bit more complicated than that. It was divided between those who were largely for the mission, believed it was succeeding and would succeed, and

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those who in the most cases were also for the mission in principle, but were doubting whether it would be successful and whether it was worth the cost. That's a big difference than if people were actually opposed on principle, or morally, to what we were doing. I don't think there are very many people in Canada or in fact in the western countries who think that the Taliban alternative to the Karzai government is desirable for anybody, for us, for the Afghan people, anyone else. Yeah, we need to do a better job of communicating our successes. It's hard when you're suffering casualties. That's the headline. You know, it's not as sexy to report that there have been hundreds of local development council start projects, or there is irrigation operations, or more and more girls are going to school. Those are not headline stories every day, and we have to do...we have to do...we have to do better jobs of communicating those things. But that said, what I was encouraged by in Canadian public opinion is we've actually found that when you argue our self-interest, that we have a vested interest in ensuring, a strong interest, nationally and globally, in ensuring that Afghanistan does not revert to the kind of failed state that launches 9/11 attacks. That's actually less appealing to Canadian public opinion than the argument that we actually are concretely helping the Afghan people with their lives. That's actually something that Canadians and I think members of other NATO democracies respond to quite positively. So you know, I think we just have to, you know, as our troops are daily slogging it out in the field, we have to keep trying to slog it out in the communications media to make sure the bigger pictures being told.

HAMID KARZAI: Please, I have something to add.

MODERATOR: Yes, please.

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HAMID KARZAI: Adding to the Secretary General's and the Prime Minister's very good remarks on the issue, sir, another problem here is that we, meaning the Afghan government and our partners in the international community, are not really capably, effectively communicating the achievements in Afghanistan on a daily basis to the rest of the world, even to the Afghan people. All that we have gone through in terms of successes in the past six years, little of that, very little of that is known to the rest of the world, other than the big headlines of the presidential election, the Parliament's elections and the likes of it. For example, how many of us in this room know, let alone when you go into the larger society across the west, the rest of the world, how many people know that we had a cabinet meeting yesterday in the northern city of (inaudible) where the German PRT has the main responsibility, and after having done the cabinet meeting, we went and inaugurate the paving of a road, asphaltting of a road that would connect eventually northern Afghanistan to southern Afghanistan to the city of Kandahar. We yesterday inaugurated the 140 kilometres of that road. How many people know that? Very, very few, and I don't think they would ever come to know about that if we don't talk about it. So I think it is upon us, the Afghan government more, and our friends, to communicate better with the rest of the world on what has been achieved and what cost have we paid for it. That is very important.

MODERATOR: Thank you, sir. Gentleman here in the blue shirt.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) General, especially to you about the NATO council. During your recent visit to Warsaw, you had about eight questions and only one was about Afghanistan, so there is not much of a

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worry, but later we had a discussion, and it concentrated on a military civilian reconstruction aspect. And we worry, and this feeling of insecurity, whether we are winning or not, is a result of the situation that we observe progress, but then it's reverted by the security situation. That means some people rule during the day, some people rule during the night, kill local supporters of central government, and the situation is very unstable. How can we expect our society's NGOs to send civilian reconstruction teams if we cannot at the same time safeguard their safety?

JAAP DE HOOP SCHEFFER: That might still be true in a few parts of Afghanistan, but if you take the country as a whole, that analysis is simply wrong. It is simply wrong. Go there. See for yourself. It is not true. Indeed, there are signs of weakness, and let me also say, IEDs and suicide attacks, what do they do? They of course are killing the most innocent Afghan civilians, and as President Karzai told us a few weeks ago in Kabul, more hated than feared by the Afghan people themselves. So that's a sign of weakness. It is true that the going is tough from time to time, but it is untrue, and I simply do not share that analysis, that in greater parts of Afghanistan, there is relative security and stability, but again, you cannot bring a country in the state it was in 2001 in seven or eight years into making it like Poland or the Netherlands or Canada, for that matter. That is simply impossible. And for that, we need, and I think there we should do better. We need better civil-military integration. Kai Eide is going, of course, in close cooperation with the Afghan government, going to look after that. I think there is still too much of a disconnect between the civil and the military. That is one of the elements I would like to see in the EU-NATO relationship, but that is not this afternoon's subject, but there we could, I think, create a lot of added value

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between NATO and the European Union. But that aside, I think if we look at Afghanistan now, and I'm a regular visitor, you see...go to the Canadian PRT in Kandahar. You see what has been achieved there. You see the Canadians training policemen and you see the results of that. I mean, there is a lot going well, but good news, as was said before, unfortunately the opening of a school where 500 girls go to school is not news. I'll say it a bit more cynical. There was one journalist who told me when I was in Afghanistan, "Secretary General, that school is only of interest to my camera when it burns." (LAUGHTER) That is cynicism at the core. That makes me extremely angry. Extremely angry. Because there's a lot at stake, but a lot has been achieved, not denying that the challenges are still huge.

MODERATOR: (Inaudible) yes.

QUESTION: Bernard Jenkin, MP from the United Kingdom. May I ask President Karzai, whom I had the pleasure of meeting in Kabul last year, why did you veto the appointment of Lord Ashdown as the UN Coordinator?

HAMID KARZAI: Sir, I did not veto the appointment of Lord Ashdown. I met with Mr. Ashdown in Kuwait. I knew him as a younger student when he was...I mean, I knew him in absence, now that I have met with him. I knew of him as the leader of the Liberal Party, and I was familiar with his name, and I met with him then when he was proposed as the SRSG in Kuwait, liked him very much, very capable man, a very sound man, a man who would have definitely been of great help to Afghanistan. And I agreed with the appointment, worked out the terms of reference for his appointment and waited for the Secretary General of the United Nations to meet with him. That meeting took place a month after we met. We spoke the next day on

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telephone and I invited him to come to Kabul or meet with me before that in Davos where I was going to attend the conference, the economic forum. Unfortunately, stories appeared in the press. In London Times an article appeared in which the article spoke about Afghanistan in extremely ethnic terms, especially the government of Afghanistan was referred to in extremely ethnic terms. First of all, that was not true. Even if it is true, it is not the business of...the international press to play it up and use it as if it's something that an outsider can fix. So, in the interest of Afghanistan and in the interest of rejecting that perception, that notion with a lot of, you know...how should I put it? With a very heavy heart, something that I did not want to do, I decided to decline for that moment, and I'm very sorry for that. He's a good man. Being British of course is all the more important because there's tremendous admiration, personal that I have. I'm a product of English education, so I'm sorry that he's not there; something that I had to do without my liking.

MODERATOR: How would you define the mission of the new Coordinator, Kai Eide? What do you think his job is? What has to be done?

HAMID KARZAI: Mr. Kai Eide is the new Secretary General's representative, a man of admirable qualities. I've met with him already. He's (inaudible) Afghanistan. His job is to work with us to improve the standards of the Afghan government, view what's needed in Afghanistan, ask Afghans, through the help of the United Nations, and also to cause coordination between the international community, especially on aspects of development and coordination between countries, and connect that international coordination to Afghanistan and coordinate that way. It is a three-way thing.

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MODERATOR: Tall order. The gentleman behind you actually had his hand up first. The gentleman with the red tie.

QUESTION: This is for President Karzai. My name is Dan Rundy. I'm formerly with the US Agency for International Development, so I'm a US citizen. Too often we hear in the press about all the negative stories that come out of Afghanistan. I wanted to ask you and to give you a clear opportunity to talk about all the progress that's been made in the last couple of years. Could you please elaborate a little bit about the progress that's been made in the last six years, and then talk about how you...what would you consider a success over the next 24 to 36 months?

MODERATOR: Oh dear, that's going to take up the rest of the panel. Is there one sector in particular that interests you?

HAMID KARZAI: I'll be short. I'll be short. I'll be short.

MODERATOR: No, no, we don't want to give short shrift to it, but...

HAMID KARZAI: Right. I'll be short. First of all, I'm beginning to see references in the press at times to Afghanistan as having been a failed state and going to be a failed state, and I would quote here the President of Slovenia who was talking to our Foreign Minister Dr. (inaudible) a month ago, and who told him that actually it's not right to refer to Afghanistan as having been a failed state. Afghanistan was not a failed state. Afghanistan was a destroyed state, completely destroyed state, from the institutions to the physical infrastructure to all other things that matter as in a state. Therefore, we have done two things together with the international community. Now, I must say it clearly here once again, without the presence of all of you in Afghanistan, the international community, none would have

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been possible for us what we have today. First, the liberation of Afghanistan. Second, the rebuilding of the Afghan state. The rebuilding of the Afghan state...

JAAP DE HOOP SCHEFFER: (Whispering): I have to leave in a moment...

HAMID KARZAI: ...where 25 percent to 30 percent of the population of the country were refugees in the neighbouring countries of which nearly 5 billion have already returned to Afghanistan. Second, where health services were available only to nine percent of the Afghan population, which is now available to more than 85 percent of the Afghan population. We even have health services in parts of the country that never in the life of our nation had a health services. The (inaudible) area of Afghanistan, where we have now sent mobile clinics, and schools. We never had in the past as a consequence of the past 30 years of destruction any diagnostic and curative services in Afghanistan. Thousands and thousands of Afghans had to go to Pakistan or Iran or the richer ones to the rest of the world to get some form of treatment, even the basic ones. Treatment for a common cold. Today, we have for 40 percent of our people possibilities of diagnostic and curative services in our hospitals. Schools, millions of children. Only this year for the summer schools of Afghanistan – Afghanistan has two timings for schools, the winter and the summer. The summer is for the places that are cold, and the winter is for the places that are warmer. Only for the summertime schooling, we have 500 000 new enrolments of kids attending for the first time the primary schooling. 6 million children going to school. Universities, the eight students that you see here are the product of this new opening, this opportunity that Afghanistan has been given. Business, economic growth, 2007, 13.5

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percent of economic growth, and likewise the GDP twice. Economy has grown twice from 2002 to today, from the legitimate part, I mean. The legitimate part. From \$4 billion to today's \$9.5 billion. Roads, 4000 kilometres. We had not a single kilometre of paved road left. It was all destroyed. Now we have 400 kilometres. The ring road of the country is going to be completed. We're linked to all our neighbours already in massive transportation. Yesterday the Russian Ambassador was with me, and I was surprised. He told me that trade with Russia in 2002 was \$30 million. Today that trade stands at \$390 million with Russia alone. With Pakistan, \$600 million. With Iran, \$400 million. With Tajekstan, with the rest of the world, China, with the United States. It's a country that is again there among all of you.

MODERATOR: Thank you Mr. President.

HAMID KARZAI: That's what matters most.

MODERATOR: Thank you. A student of Afghanistan would like to ask you a question, actually.

QUESTION: Thank you very much.

JAAP DE HOOP SCHEFFER: I really have to leave.

MODERATOR: Just one question and then...

JAAP DE HOOP SCHEFFER: Ok.

QUESTION: I don't have a question, but I have a suggestion, and I hope you find it interesting. As it is mentioned that here in Afghanistan, 40 percent of the money contributed to us is taken back by the foreigners, so I as an Afghan suggest for NATO members not to forget us, but support us further in terms of giving more scholarships for the young

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generation to work hard for their country for a better future. Thank you very much.

HAMID KARZAI: Wonderful! Good idea.
(APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Thank you very much. That's a very good...

HAMID KARZAI: Good idea.

MODERATOR: Yes. I know Mr. Scheffer has to leave. I just want to raise a question that figures more and more in the discussions about what would it mean to actually succeed in Afghanistan. What about the involvement of neighbouring Pakistan? There are those who say the time has come to consider this as one strategic theatre, what's happening in the tribal areas of Pakistan, in Pakistan proper and in Afghanistan, and yet there have really not been regular NATO-Pakistan meetings, discussions on this. Is this going to change?

JAAP DE HOOP SCHEFFER: It should. I must answer your question by saying first that the military to military contacts with Pakistan are very good, tripartite – that means Afghanistan-Pakistan-ISAF, NATO. That works well. What we now have to do is to complement this military dialogue with a political one, and this is one of the subjects I discussed with President Karzai this morning, or he with me. I asked him his analysis about the new government of Pakistan. I do think that NATO ISAF needs a political dialogue with Pakistan, because it's crystal clear that instability there, instability in the tribal areas will lead to instability in Afghanistan, and the two nations are linked in that regard. But I must also admit that there is of course a limit to what NATO as such can do in this

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regard, but I do think that apart from the military dialogue, we need a political one as well, and I'm looking forward, as soon as the new government in Pakistan has settled, to go to Islamabad again – I was there before; that also never happened, of course, in NATO's history – to go again and to see how we can build up a more intensive political dialogue on our common fight against terrorism and I heard the first remarks by the Pakistani Prime Minister Gilani in this regard, I his commitment to the fight against terrorism, and I think that's a good start.

MODERATOR: But they say they want to talk to the militants. This may create a whole new set of issues now. How do you deal with the democratically elected government and their desire for a new approach...

JAAP DE HOOP SCHEFFER: Exactly, but let us...let us go from the starting point that Pakistan is part of the solution and not qualify at the beginning immediately Pakistan as part of the problem, because I think that's not very helpful.

MODERATOR: Yes. If you could just stay for one...Bill (inaudible) question here.

JAAP DE HOOP SCHEFFER: There's another Prime Minister waiting for me, so I apologize beforehand that I have to leave the stage in a moment, but...

QUESTION: Yes, I suppose my question follows on from the question that Lise has just raised, which is whether Pakistan really is part of the solution, rather than part of the problem. Perhaps it's both. And perhaps in dealing with Pakistan, we do need a recognition that there's been a lot of quiet diplomacy over a very large number of years with Pakistan which

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has not actually delivered all that much. We have, in August last year, the admission by President Musharraf that there is a problem in southern Afghanistan because of support being provided to the Taliban from Pakistan's side of the border. And if Pakistan is indeed a sovereign state, then surely it has responsibilities as well as simply rights. And one of those responsibilities is to prevent its territory from being used by anyone for hostile acts against the government of Afghanistan, and therefore my question would be what kind of measures can the NATO states draw to Pakistan's attention that might be taken towards it in the event that it is not prepared to act forcefully to address the problem of sanctuaries within its territory?

MODERATOR: We'll get a brief comment from all of you, yes.

JAAP DE HOOP SCHEFFER: Well, very brief, because I think this is a question which President Karzai is in a better position to answer than I am, but it has relevance, of course, for the NATO ISAF forces. I think what we should do...I mean, NATO...we must realize NATO not only does not own Afghanistan, but NATO can also not take responsibility for everything in the region. NATO is a political military alliance. What we need is a political dialogue. What we need, but I think that should be a process steered and guided by President Karzai and the Prime Minister and President in Pakistan, we need a political process which will make it possible to address the admittedly serious problems and problem at the border, which is basically making parts of Afghanistan more instable than President Karzai, Prime Minister Harper and I would like to see it. But you need a political dialogue before you can seriously start to address the problem.

MODERATOR: President Karzai?

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HAMID KARZAI: Sir, I agree with all that you analysed. It's exactly the way it is. For that reason, we have been engaged concertedly with our brothers and sisters in Pakistan. For that reason we initiated a process called the Afghanistan-Pakistan Joint (inaudible) which had its first meeting in Kabul last summer, a meeting of the Afghan and Pakistan civil society representative, nearly 700 of all of us. We have as a result of that appointed sub-commissions of 25 each. The new government in place is of the same view on matter of extremism and terrorism as we are. There is a lot of hope that together we'll move forward. We recognize in Afghanistan that without a constructive relationship with Pakistan in all aspects, security, economic, movement of people, Afghanistan will not be a prosperous country or a peaceful country as we desire it, as NATO desires it, as the countries helping Afghanistan desire it. Therefore we will continue that engagement. I'm more hopeful today than I was some time back. Let's think this a good beginning and keep the efforts on.

MODERATOR: Prime Minister Harper, you just...

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: If I can just maybe give a note of optimism on that, and this has been a very difficult problem for countries in the south, the Afghan-Pakistan border. That said, you know, we were all told not too long ago that if we had democracy in Pakistan, we'd, you know, set these extremists loose. What we observed was happening was the previous government of Pakistan was actually cracking down on democratic elements, not on the extremist elements, and we started to see the extremist elements growing in Pakistan itself. What we've seen since, now I think has been a reaction, and in the election we saw those elements thoroughly rejected

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in the very areas, the border areas of the country that we're worried about. So I think we have reason for optimism on that front if we can build on that.

HAMID KARZAI: Wonderful.

MODERATOR: You have to... Really good to see you, thank you very much. Thank you very much.

HAMID KARZAI: We're leaving? Ok, thank you. See you tomorrow.

MODERATOR: The NATO Secretary General has to leave, but please, do remain in your seats, because we're going to continue our discussions with President Karzai and Prime Minister Harper. Thank you. He's not escaping the heat. He just has to meet another prime minister. This gentleman here.

QUESTION: Bill Groves, yeah, American Council on Germany. President Karzai, you've had some bitter differences of opinion with your western partners about what to do in terms of trying to split perhaps the Taliban and its Al-Qaeda allies. And secondly, what to do about the record opium production in your country, which has funded a lot of the Taliban insurgency. Are you...can you explain today what you hope to achieve in terms of these two areas? Are you getting more support now from your western allies?

HAMID KARZAI: Right, sir, on the question of what we term as reconciliation, or the peace process, our mind is very clear and straight, and that is also recognized, understood and supported by our allies. We consider those Taliban who are Afghans, who are not part of Al Qaeda or the other terrorist networks, whoever they are, and who have been driven out of Afghanistan for fear or confusion, and who are willing to come back to

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Afghanistan and participate in accordance with the constitution of Afghanistan in life, in social and political and economic activities, they are welcome. Our doors are open. They're Afghans and they have a place in their country. That is the objective of the peace process. And there is more and more understanding and recognition of...by the rest of the world with us on the question. On narcotics, it's a sinister, menacing problem for Afghanistan that affects us really, really seriously. More and more we see that those of our refugees returning from our neighbours and those within the country are affected by addiction of heroin and other substances. It's becoming a serious social problem for us, as it also is already a problem of an illegitimate economy, running shoulder-to-shoulder with the terrorist networks, with those that prevent the working of a legitimate government in the delivery of services to the Afghan people and trying to prevent peace for that reason. So it is primarily an Afghan struggle. It is our responsibility. But the magnitude of the problem is beyond the abilities of Afghanistan. They have tentacles beyond Afghanistan. They have links with international mafia. They have links in the region. They have immense illegitimate sources (inaudible). Our farmers are in their debt in lots of ways. So that is the reason that Afghanistan, together with the international community, will need much longer than we were previously thinking in handling the problem. Perhaps we need a period of five to ten years to gradually reduce poppy cultivation in the country, reduce the number of provinces producing poppies. We already have; the provinces are now about 16 who have no poppy cultivation at all. The three biggest provinces that were producing poppies, two of them have declined considerably, so it's a journey that already is showing signs of

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success, but it needs patience, dedicated work, good governance, security and economic alternatives.

MODERATOR: Two very important issues, the Taliban, what to do about the Taliban and what to do about the growing drug problem, and in fact many people see them as linked. It's a pity Mr. Scheffer had to leave, because of course that is one of the issues. Is there going to be a coordinated approach to these, because different governments seem to have different views on what should be done. The Dutch are doing it their way in (inaudible), the British in Helmand, and the Canadians in Kandahar. Mr. Harper, does your government with your military discuss...should there be talks with the Taliban? I know your National Democratic Party, New Democratic Party critic in Canada said from the beginning said you should be talking to the Taliban, not fighting against them.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, I would agree with the position that President Karzai just laid out. You know, in a country like Afghanistan, the heart of long-run peace is not simply effective security against the insurgency, but is bringing more people into the democratic process. And you know, they're not going to cease...you know, I think once again, we have to be realistic here. People who have a strong or fundamentalist Muslim views are not going to cease to be fundamentalist Muslims, but what we want them to do is lay down arms and participate through the democratic process. We've...you know, I've seen incidents myself in Kandahar where that has actually occurred. That's a good thing, but I think that's different than a naïve view that we would just say, you know, "Bring your guns and we'll kind of lay down our arms," which as you know, is the view of the element you talk about in Canada. That's not realistic. What

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President Karzai said is not only realistic, but I think is absolutely desirable. On the drug issue, you know, I think this is probably an issue where there just is going to be a divergence of opinion. I think Canada's probably in the majority view among our allies that we don't participate directly in eradication efforts because these have enormous political consequences within Afghanistan. It's essentially a governance issue. Our job in that front is to try and through development to try and provide alternatives for farmers to make a living through legitimate crops, and I think that's the best we can do, and obviously we'll take on drug traffickers when they're involved in...you know, when they contribute to the insecurity or instability in the country, but I think ultimately I think we believe strongly it's a mistake for NATO countries to engage directly in eradication without cooperation of the Afghan authorities.

MODERATOR: Thank you. The gentleman in the back with the tie...did he leave? Ah. The gentleman, this gentleman here.

QUESTION: Thank you, I'm (inaudible) Rome. Apparently we have different views on the situation in Afghanistan. General Jones says we are losing. The panel says we are making progress, more girls in schools, more streets are built. Some say that the Taliban are back, so apparently NATO does not have a NATO-wide accepted assessment of the situation of the state of play. So two questions perhaps to Prime Minister Harper. First, how can we fine-tune our measures if we don't agree, completely agree on what the situation is, and second, wouldn't it take some kind of a Bakker Commission in Iraq, so some kind of a group which provides us with an accepted assessment on which we then can build our measures? Thank you.

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RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, you know, we're all sovereign countries. We're all going to have our different takes. I...what I found interesting about the last NATO summit was it seemed to me that the evaluations were more pessimistic from those countries that were doing less rather than those countries that were in the more difficult areas. I think if I were to assess the current situation, I think you would find most people would agree with an assessment along these lines, that we are making progress, but we have not yet made progress to the point where the situation would be irreversible if we were suddenly out. And I think that's the situation. Yes, we are making progress, but we have not passed the tipping point where the cycle of...where the cycle of security development and governance really has a momentum of its own. And you know, that's something that we believe we can achieve in the years to come. You know, not too distant future, but we clearly have work to do to achieve that.

MODERATOR: Mr. Karzai, would you, what would you define as success?

HAMID KARZAI: I guess we spoke about that earlier. We need to continue and keep adding to what we have achieved, and complete the process. That's what it will take: more time, continuation of effort and... We resemble a tree that has blossomed, and you have to wait for it to give the fruits. The blossoming has arrived; the fruit is yet to come. So wait for the summer and you will have the fruits.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Maybe let me...let me just add one thing in terms of the area where I think we have had the least success, where success, more success is critical, and that is in the area of justice, in the rule of law. We tend, as western nations, to put an enormous

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emphasis when we go into failed states or destroyed states, as President Karzai would say, an enormous emphasis on democracy, on creating elections, elected officials, political parties, legislatures, but I think there's a lot of data out there to suggest that real long-run stability is probably enhanced much more by the rule of law per se than by just democratic institutions, and as President Karzai says, the police have been way behind the army. The court system is farther behind. The training of judges...these are the things that are really critical to secure good governance in the country in the years to come, and I do believe it's a capacity problem more than anything. We cannot forget – you know, we have young Afghan students with us today. We cannot forget that this is a country that had over a generation no educated people. All educated people left and no new ones were created, and it's still hard to pull educated people back, given the situation. So you have in technocratic and judicial and other functions given extremely small population to draw from to build up this capacity, and that is the generational challenge.

MODERATOR: The gentleman in the back. No, this gentleman, yes.

QUESTION: Yes, Steven Flanagan from the United States. This is a question both for the Prime Minister and the President. Even some of the discussion this afternoon I think has illustrated that while the NATO heads of state and government may agree on the rationale and goals of the NATO presence there, there does not seem to be still a clear acceptance of a common strategy. In the run-up to the defence ministers' meeting in (inaudible) Secretary Gates raised some questions about whether or not some of the other allies other than those in the south were fully committed to the notion that this was a classic counterinsurgency mission, rather than a robust

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peace support mission. There's the whole question about how NATO strategy meshes with that of the Afghan National Army and the police, and I wonder, since (inaudible) and even in the run-up now to the summit, whether you gentlemen see any narrowing of differences over strategy, and whether in addition to this agreement on the longer term goals there is some narrowing of approach, including on this whole question now that Ambassador Eide is in place, on the further advancement of this so-called comprehensive approach?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, I think there is some narrowing. There is, as the Secretary General has said, there is at this conference, there's been the preparation of a strategic document, a vision document which is, I think will ultimately be approved and released, and I think we've made significant...we've made significant ground on that. You know, in terms of...if I could just return indirectly to something that was said earlier that's relevant to your question, that's this whole notion of two-tier, that some countries are pulling their weight and others are not. I think if there really has been one NATO failure in Afghanistan, and I'm supposing this, because this was before my time, 2001, 2002, 2003. It appears to me that early on, NATO concluded the job was much easier than it was actually going to be. You know, we threw out the Taliban, we secured Kabul and we established a very nominal presence in the countryside, and then it was only I think really 2005-on that we fully grasped the nature of the security problem and the problem that would present in terms of developing governance and other economic development. And I think we were slow in understanding that. Now, some nations, Canada and others, have, you know, put more into those efforts than others, but I think it's unfair to call it two-tier in the sense that we're saying that any other nations didn't do what they initially committed to

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do. I think, you know, I think NATO allies have been pretty good at fulfilling their commitments. The fact of the matter is that we all under-committed and we all underestimated the task, and we've been compensating ever since, and so I think that...you know, I think that's the reality, but I do think that broadly speaking, you know, I think we are narrowing the differences on what needs to be done, and I think there's an overwhelming view that the approach has to be comprehensive, that what we termed the "three-D approach", Canadians termed the "three-D approach" some years ago would now be, you know, widely accepted as gospel.

MODERATOR: We're coming to a close soon. The gentleman there and then the gentleman here as well. We'll take two and then we'll...

UNIDENTIFIED: There's a lady asking for a question.

MODERATOR: Yes, ok.

QUESTION: Well, thank you. My name is Yukio Komoto and I'm from Japan. I have a question for President Karzai. Our military contribution to Afghanistan has been so far modest, limited to sending just two ships to the Indian Ocean as a part of OAF, but there is a widespread recognition that we have to do much, much more on land, especially in the field of economic reconstruction. But sometimes our policy-makers lose track of economic priorities in Afghanistan. Should it be agriculture, medication, education, (inaudible). Mr. President, can you share us your present thoughts today as to how you envision your roadmap to your economic recovery? Thank you.

MODERATOR: Ok, just we're going to take another question first here with...microphone down here, please? And then the lady as

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well. I think we've done quite a bit on the economic side, but we'll let the President address that, and about the Japanese contribution, I understand.

HAMID KARZAI: I'd like to address the Japanese contribution.

MODERATOR: Yes, yes.

QUESTION: My name is Misha Glennie. I've just published a book called "McMafia: Crime Without Frontiers", which looks at the nexus between conflicts and the narcotics trade in a number of places, including Afghanistan. The war on drugs is one which invests in poppy a value which is astronomical compared to commodities which operate in legal markets. One of the reasons why we have been having such difficulty militarily since 2003 is because the Taliban has been...has gathered a huge revenue stream almost exclusively from the sale of narcotics. This is hundreds of millions of dollars every year, which are being used to kill NATO servicemen and women. And I wonder, and I address this in particular to Prime Minister Harper, whether we will start to address the issue of a demand-driven economy in narcotics, which our law enforcement agencies in the west are completely unable to control because at the moment, the Taliban, and I know this from conversations with them and their narcotics distributors, are the biggest backers of the war on drugs.

MODERATOR: Just...that's a very complex, but just pass the microphone along to this lady here with the blue...yes.

QUESTION: Hi, my name is (inaudible). I'm an independent consultant from Romania. I have two questions for President Karzai. Mr. President, it's a very straightforward question, and kind of with a personal touch. When you look back at the things that have been...that you

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personally and your country has been going through in the last six years, what is your worst fear when you think about the future of your country? And the second question is I would like to hear more about your efforts and the resources that you are putting in the state-building process. Thank you very much.

MODERATOR: Ok, which...the Japanese first?

HAMID KARZAI: I'd like to address the Japanese, and then Prime Minister Harper, you take the narcotics one.

MODERATOR: The drugs. (LAUGHTER)

HAMID KARZAI: Sir, with regard to Japan's contribution to Afghanistan, Japan is in the front line of the countries helping Afghanistan financially in addition to the maritime shipping assistance that it's giving to the NATO forces. Japan has also been involved in the DDR process; that's the collection of illegal arms from armed groups. Now it's working on another part of this process. Yesterday, as a matter of fact, before flying to (inaudible), I visited the airport in Kabul that Japan is building for us, a very nice one that will have the capacity of receiving, handling almost a million passengers a year. Japan is involved in schools, Japan is involved in the construction of roads, Japan is involved in the construction of other assistance to Afghanistan. Afghanistan's priorities today are the same as they were six years ago, with one addition of emphasis today on irrigation, agriculture and the provision of energy, electricity to the Afghan people.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: I'll just talk quickly on the nexus of the insurgency and the drug trade, which I agree is a serious and growing problem. But I also would put in this context, I think it's a problem likely to be with us for some time. You know, where we have drug trades and

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insurgencies linked to drug trades in other parts of the world, we've seen that's a persistent phenomenon, one that in and of itself need not lead to a failed state or a kind of state that backs terrorism, and I do think that – and I'm not trying to say it's a silver lining, but I do think it's significant to see the evolution of the insurgency from an ideologically-inspired terrorist insurgency to one that is increasingly a commercial or narcotic-based insurgency. Still problematic, but in the sense of the global strategic issues that led us to Afghanistan, actually an improvement over the situation. Now, I would agree with what you seem to assert in your question, that ultimately the problem is not in Afghanistan as much as the problem is elsewhere in terms of the demand. You know, I'm a believer that anti-drug strategies have to address both the supply and the demand. And I don't think you can address it only through demand-based strategies. I think part of the reason you have high prices for drugs and such violent economics around drugs is the nature of addiction itself and the nature of the demand that creates. But that said, we have to have both strategies. A pure war on the supply of drugs is not and will not be successful, so we have to demand strategies, and that goes beyond...I've spoken about this before in Canada. I think that goes beyond, you know, merely discouraging the use of drugs or pointing out the bad use of drugs. I think it is to some degree still part of an, you know, an element of our culture from the '60s on that has glorified or romanticized the use of drugs and is still very prevalent. Less so than it was maybe 20 or 30 years ago, but one that still nevertheless exists. It still nevertheless is very prevalent in youth culture, and one that I think we should take seriously.

HAMID KARZAI: Ma'am, my worst fear is leaving the job half done. That applies both to the international community and

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Afghanistan. And not bringing to the Afghan people justice, as they expect it. And allowing extremists and terrorists to continue without a firm, committed struggle against them by all of us, including the neighbours of Afghanistan. These concerns addressed, we'll be on a very safe journey to a better future in Afghanistan.

MODERATOR: Well, on that note, a positive note; I know the press has got a very bad reputation from all the criticisms in this panel, but perhaps it is in the nature of the whole mission in Afghanistan that there is a true division of opinion, to use that well-worn cliché. For some people, it's a glass half empty. For other people, it is a glass half full. And some of course would say, well, just kick the table over that the glass is on, because we need a whole new glass in order to look at this, à la we need a new strategy. I think what is absolutely clear to our participants and to all of you here in the room is that it's undeniable that Afghanistan is a different place than it was in 2001 when the Taliban were toppled. It is also undeniably clear that there is a lot of work to be done, and not only is it clear to the international community, to the Afghans, that it is perhaps far more complicated and dangerous than people thought in 2001, but in some areas it's going ahead. In some areas it's slipping again. And therefore the relationships, both among Afghans, the relationship between the international community and Afghanistan, and the relationship as has been discussed here and will be discussed of course at the NATO summit, the relationship between the military and the civilian and other actors is absolutely crucial as well. So the debate will have to continue. We started off by asking success not in sight, failure is not an option. Perhaps we'll still go away with that article of faith,

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but of course, the debate will go on. Thank you very much for joining us here.
(APPLAUSE) President, it's a pleasure.

UNIDENTIFIED: And I want to thank our two
panellists...

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Thank you, Lise.

UNIDENTIFIED: President Karzai, great to have you
here. Prime Minister Harper, wonderful. I want to make a special thanks to
Chatham House. They've done a lot of good things for us as part of this
partnership, but giving us a terrific new moderator to use is a really special
treat, and thank you so much. That was a really a great...
