

## Afghanistan: Beyond the Bonn Agreement

Following last year's historic presidential elections that brought President Hamid Karzai's government into office, Afghans once again headed to the polls in September this year to elect a new parliament, its first fully representative legislature in three decades. The birth of the new parliament also marked a successful conclusion of the Bonn Agreement, the political blueprint that has guided Afghanistan's transition to peace and national reconciliation since it was signed in Germany in December 2001.

The parliamentary election highlighted the immense strides Afghanistan has made in a few short years. Civil society and the media participated actively at every step of the process, and there was a marked improvement in how govern-

ment institutions managed the elections, particularly the military and the police.

Threats and attacks on election workers and candidates failed to derail the process. More than half of the 12.4 million registered voters went to the polls, with relatively few security incidents. About 5,800 candidates ran for election, with 25 percent of the seats reserved for women. In addition, women also won seats in their own right in about 13 of the 34 provinces. It took more than a month to count and certify the elections, and the final results were announced in early November.

In spite of positive changes, however, turnout was lower than expected in some parts of the country, and many

electoral complaints were filed. The single non-transferable voting system, under which people voted for individual candidates not political parties, saw many candidates without affiliation to any political party being elected into parliament at the expense of established political parties.

The 2005 parliamentary provincial council elections, which were supported by the United Nations, also presented significantly greater challenges than in 2004, from the need for extensive civic education to the transporting of voting materials to more than 26,000 polling stations – roughly ten times last year's volume – with some ballots listing hundreds of candidates. UNDP started training 270 parliamentary staff begin-

OCPI/UNAMA Photo by Freshta Dunya



Women mark their ballots in Afghanistan's National Assembly and Provincial Council elections, Kabul, 18 September 2005.

ning in February to ensure the smooth functioning of the legislature. The new Afghan parliament opened its first session in December, signaling the birth of a new nation and the fulfillment of a promise made four years ago in Bonn.

Meanwhile, the UN Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) continued its work supporting Afghan institutions in the face of several challenges that included persistent security problems, a booming illegal economy fuelled by opium poppies, a weak justice system and government institutions susceptible to corruption. Nonetheless, the groundwork that UNAMA and its international partners laid over the past several years enabled important steps to be made towards further stability and development.

The disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programme, which begun in 2003, was completed in July. Of the 63,380 ex-fighters who were disarmed under the programme, more than 60,000 had received or were undergoing training in agriculture or business. A few thousand combatants joined the Afghan National Army, which is expected to reach its target strength of 43,000 by September 2007, three years ahead of schedule. The current plan provides for the training of 62,000 police officers, two-thirds of whom were trained by the end of the year.

UNAMA has also taken an active role in mediating long-standing tribal disputes. The most successful was the settlement in June of a 60-year-old feud between the Balkhel and Sabari tribes in Khost province in the southeast. The dispute had caused the death of dozens of people in recent years, along with kidnappings, livestock losses, and the closure of an important road linking the affected area to the provincial capital.

Even without continued insecurity, Afghanistan faces enormous development challenges. The government's endorsement in 2005 of Afghanistan's first Millennium Development Goals Report, drafted with UNDP and UNAMA assistance, represented a crucial step. The priority of the UN family in the country will be to assist Afghanistan to meet the MDG targets. ■

## Iraq: UNAMI underpins the transitional political process

Although events in Iraq during 2005 were well chronicled in the media, the contributions of the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) received less attention. Yet throughout the year, UNAMI's team of political, electoral, constitutional, information, humanitarian and human rights experts-- working mostly from within Baghdad's International Zone and from Amman and Kuwait,--employed their expertise and resources to assist the Iraqi people and government with their political and economic development.

The mandate given UNAMI in Security Council resolution 1546 tasks the mission with facilitating the political process in Iraq and encouraging that process to be as inclusive and transparent as possible. In November 2005 the Security Council reaffirmed UNAMI's mandate with the passage of resolution 1637. To that end the Special Representative of the Secretary General and the UNAMI team engaged Iraqis of all political and ethnic backgrounds throughout the year.

As Iraq underwent the complexity of a political transition process, UNAMI focused its activities on providing political, electoral and constitutional support, while at the same time coordinating donor assistance and providing support for Iraq's reconstruction and development. The mission's human rights office monitored abuses and strove to support the rehabilitation of Iraqi institutions that would be responsible for improving the human rights situation in the country. Terrorism, torture, arbitrary detentions and extrajudicial killings continued to present a major challenge to the rule of law.

In 2005, the Iraqi people voted three times on the future of their country, including a referendum on 15 October on the new Iraqi constitution. Through its assistance to the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI), the UN provided critical support to these electoral processes.

With UN assistance, Iraq was able to meet each major stage during the past year's political timetable as set by the Security Council. Elections for the Transitional National Assembly in January 2005, organized by the IECI, produced a Transitional Iraqi Government and set in motion the process to draft a national constitution. Intense negotiations over the drafting went on from May through mid-October, with the SRSG encouraging all parties to support the process, and emphasizing that the constitution be inclusive and representative of all Iraqis.

During this period, UNAMI's Office of Constitutional Support provided technical advice, capacity-building and donor coordination. Together with UNDP, the Office also arranged for the printing and dissemination of the constitution, while the Iraqi authorities were responsible for distributing it. UNAMI also mobilized the Iraqi media to raise public awareness of the entire process.

With the 15 December elections for a Council of Representatives, Iraq entered the last phase of its formal transition process under the Transitional Administrative Law. However, Iraq continues to face significant challenges, particularly with regard to national security, which continues to be a daunting and elusive goal.

While the tenuous security forced the UN's 95 international staff to remain largely confined to the Green Zone, the UN deployed hundreds of local and international staff in Iraq at the peak of operations during 2005, including in Basra and Erbil.

On 12 November, 2005 Secretary-General Kofi Annan visited Iraq to reiterate the UN's commitments.

In his last report of 2005, the Secretary-General cautioned that the December elections would not mark the end of the



Secretary-General Kofi Annan Arrives in Baghdad, Iraq, 12 November 2005

country's political transition, "but the beginning of a new phase in which responsible politics and leadership will make the difference between success and failure." In 2006 UNAMI is to remain

engaged in further implementing its Security Council mandate with a view to promoting national dialogue and reconciliation and shaping the democratic future of Iraq. ■

## UNSCO mediates, coordinates UN work in the Middle East

For Gaza, where the United Nations Special Coordinator's Office (UNSCO) for the Middle East works to improve the prospects for real peace, the highlight of 2005 was Israel's unilateral withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories of Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank. The withdrawal raised hopes of a resumption of the peace process under the Road Map, the peace plan presented to the parties in 2003 by the Quartet, a diplomatic grouping comprising the UN, the European Union, Russia and the United States.

This hope, however, has yet to be met. Following the withdrawal, there was a brief period of quiet before yet another cycle of violence was set in motion, causing deaths and injuries on both

sides. Restrictions on the movement of people and goods continued to have a devastating impact on the Palestinian economy. Israeli authorities eased restrictions somewhat on the movement of Palestinians in the West Bank this year by removing several military checkpoints, but numerous constraints to social and economic development remained. As a consequence, a high proportion of Palestinians now rely on humanitarian assistance.

UN agencies continued to deliver humanitarian and development assistance under the leadership of UNSCO. Meanwhile, UNSCO continued its mediation efforts, bilaterally with the parties to the peace process, and also as part of the wider international community. ■

## Political missions:

The main tasks for UN political missions, which are run by the Department of Political Affairs, are to prevent or resolve deadly conflicts around the globe and to consolidate peace in societies emerging from war.

In May, the **UN Mission of Support in Timor-Leste (UNMISSET)** completed its mandate after six years of steering the country's independence from Indonesia. In its report released in July, the Commission of Experts set up to review the prosecution of serious crimes in Timor-Leste recommended that Indonesia review its prosecutions and that some cases of abuse be reopened.

As a testimony of UNMISSET's success and the country's political stability, its successor, the **UN Office in Timor-Leste (UNOTIL)**, did not have peacekeeping troops. The international community had recognized that Timor-Leste was safe and peaceful and that its authorities were able to take over the responsibility for maintaining internal and external security.

UNOTIL's mandate included support in capacity building to Timor-Leste's state institutions, such as the national police. In December, as evidence of the transformation of the world's newest nation from a beneficiary to a contributor to UN peacekeeping operations, 10 UNOTIL-trained police officers from the Timor-Leste national police were deployed for peacekeeping duties with the UN police contingents in Kosovo.

Meanwhile, Timor-Leste's relations with Indonesia continued to improve.

The **UN Observer Mission in Bougainville (UNOMB)** ended in June with the swearing in of Bougainville's first autonomous provincial government. The mission had helped to end violence in the province of Bougainville Island which had fought a long secessionist struggle against

Papua New Guinea. During its stay in the region, the UN was instrumental in negotiating, mediating and facilitating the resolution of the decade-long conflict that ended in 1998. The UN also supervised the collection and destruction of some 2,000 weapons, pushed the parties to meet agreed pre-election deadlines and ultimately facilitated the election itself.

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With **The Central African Republic** gradually returning to a path of peace, economic recovery, reconstruction and sustainable development, the **UN Peacebuilding Support Office (BONUCA)** continued to pursue its mandate to strengthen political dialogue and promote the rule of law.

However, the country's economic recovery was hindered by an upsurge in cross-border banditry and the proliferation of weapons in the sub-region.

The **UN Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS)** supported the country's presidential elections in June and the runoff held in July. On 1 October, the winner, João Bernardo Vieira, was sworn into office as President, ending three decades of coups and counter-coups. With the swearing in of a new leader, the country hoped to move away from the divisions of the past towards a more harmonious and constructive future.

However, political tensions along personality and party lines continued to cast a shadow on the prospects for stability. Meanwhile, UNOGBIS continued to promote the rule of law and human rights, consolidate peace and assist national authorities in drafting

legislation on the prevention, treatment and control of HIV/AIDS.

The **UN Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS)** provided intensive support to the Somali National Reconciliation Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya, under the auspices of the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and worked with international partners to help Somali leaders agree on a transitional administration.

By early 2005, the Conference had produced a broad-based Transitional Federal Government which moved back to Somalia in mid-2005 from its temporary base in Nairobi.

Somalia continued to be beset by serious political problems, including an assassination attempt in November against Prime Minister Ali Mohammed Gedi in Mogadishu, and an increased inflow of illegal weapons inside the country in violation of the UN arms embargo and political violence.

The **UN Tajikistan Office of Peacebuilding (UNTOP)** was instrumental in helping to build democratic institutions and foster peace in the country during the vulnerable post-civil war period. It provided technical assistance for the parliamentary elections in February 2005.

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**UNOWA used its good offices to coordinate UN support to the region, mediate and organize meetings in an effort to address sub-regional cross-border challenges to peace and security.**

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UNTOP's human rights information resource centre became popular with Tajiks who were able to use it for studying human rights, accessing the internet and receiving legal consultations.

By the end of the year, UNTOP, with support from UNDP, had trained 1,100 police officers on human rights. More than 300 people from 41 district



UN Photo by Ian Steele

*One of the demobilized women who recently graduated as a police officer after training offered by UNDP, Hargeisa, Somalia, 30 October 2005*

commissions and 3,000 local election commission members took part in a series of seminars on international election standards, election laws and procedures in Tajikistan.

The **UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA)** was active in promoting cooperation among UN peacekeeping and political missions based in the region. There was visible progress in maintaining political stability in **Sierra Leone**, and in **Liberia**, where elections led to the election of the first women head of state in Africa, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

The situation in **Togo** stabilized after days of violence caused by the death of former President Eyadema. However, a political stalemate in **Côte d'Ivoire** caused the postponement of the country's elections.

Regional challenges included the flow of small arms and light weapons in the region; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants; the fight against HIV/AIDS; refugees and displaced persons and youth unemployment. ■