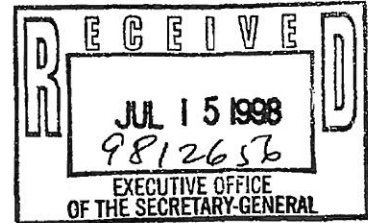


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NOTE TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

1. I have just completed my mission to Tajikistan and Kazakhstan, at the invitation of the two governments. On the way there, I stopped in earthquake-affected areas of Northern Afghanistan.
2. Afghanistan. The emergency relief system organized by the United Nations, the ICRC and NGOs, which relied heavily on the use of eleven chartered helicopters, succeeded in providing tangible assistance to the population affected by the serious earthquake last May. Cooperation between these various components proved to be effective, as confirmed by the Governor of Badakhshan province, Said Mohammed Amin Tariq, during my meeting with him in Faizabad. Perhaps, the main lesson that can be drawn from this operation is that in a similar case in the future, the time required to secure the helicopters, needs to be shortened considerably. A number of possible stand by options is being explored with neighbouring countries.
3. The emergency relief phase is drawing to a close at the end of this week and goes into a regular UN/ICRC/NGO country operation. The relief phase should be closely followed by rehabilitation and reconstruction activities, as well as the possible resettlement of some people to safer villages. The response of donors, so encouraging in the emergency phase, needs to continue, if the rehabilitation activities are to be completed by mid-September, before the onset of cold weather.
4. Tajikistan. The peace process is proceeding at a pace much slower than stipulated in the Protocols of the General Agreement, signed just over a year ago. This did not, however, prevent me from coming away with a feeling of guarded optimism concerning its future. It is based on firm indications from President Rakhmonov, other high officials, as well as representatives of the Opposition, that both parties had had enough of the war and were looking towards consolidating peace. This seems to represent the best guarantee against a resumption of all-out hostilities. Both sides conceded, however, that there will be continued sporadic clashes around the country, as the government and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) attempt to crack down on rogue groups and armed criminal activity.
5. Although a modicum of trust seems to have been attained between the highest levels of the UTO and the government (attested to, in part, by the fact that UTO leaders are transferring their families back to Dushanbe), my meetings in Tajikistan also revealed the overall deep level of mutual distrust which continues to exist between the two entities at intermediate and lower levels. Fueling this mistrust is the wide range of unresolved problems requiring energetic effort on the part of the government and of the UTO. I communicated very insistently the need to speed up the process of implementation of all Protocols, and especially of such issues as the political integration of the Opposition and implementation of the Amnesty Law.
6. It is also clear that Tajikistan finds itself at a very difficult and delicate juncture in the implementation of the General Agreement, one that requires a renewed commitment from donors, if the international community is to assist the two sides in navigating this peace accord to a safe shore.
7. The issue of demobilization and reintegration of fighters into civilian life is primary among those that require urgent financial support. I visited an Assembly Area in Garm, which houses the latest group of 153 UTO fighters who returned from Afghanistan last week (transported and escorted by the CIS PKF). Among the most battle-hardened units, this group is housed in the bare shell of a dormitory-style building. Most important, these men are heavily armed and idle. It is imperative that donors "invest" in peace, primarily by delivering what was pledged in Vienna and Paris, instead of waiting for peace to miraculously flourish on its own, before contributing to tangible rehabilitation activities. This is a message which I intend to clearly convey to donors and which, I believe, it is important for you to support.
8. To all interlocutors, I stressed the need to fully cooperate with your new Special Representative Kubiš, whose background was a clear manifestation of your commitment to peace in that country, and his Deputy Lembo (who is also Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, an ideal structural combination in such situations of transition from conflict to peace).

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9. Natural disasters, most importantly heavy flooding, have added a severe blow this year to an already difficult socioeconomic situation in Tajikistan. The government's resources for emergency relief are exhausted and little to no assistance is forthcoming from the outside. This greatly exacerbates the existing problem of shelter.

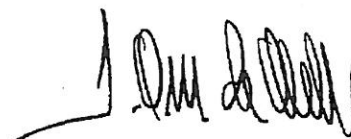
10. Tajikistan is also the custodian of a potential ecological problem of regional proportions. Lake Sarez, a high-altitude body of water, created in the early 1900s by a natural dam following a major landslide, is suspected to be in danger of breaching the dam as a result of the last earthquakes in Northern Afghanistan. This could have a devastating effect on the whole region beyond the lake, which includes areas in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan. I intend to organize a mission of a group of international experts to determine what preventive measures could be taken.

11. Kazakhstan. My main objective in visiting Kazakhstan was to acquaint myself with the situation at the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, where the USSR conducted more than 450 nuclear tests, among them 78 atmospheric blasts. The effect of these tests on human health and the environment are severe and will be felt for years to come. The situation is exacerbated by a general decline in the social and economic development of the area following the dissolution of the USSR. A recent UN needs assessment mission prepared an action plan which will be submitted in September as an addendum to the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly.

12. Issues of regional stability and political developments in Central Asia are foremost on the minds of Kazakh leaders. President Nazarbayev briefed me on his recent meetings with Presidents Yeltsin (conclusion of an "eternal friendship" agreement and a delineation of respective boundaries on the Caspian sea) and Jiang Zemin. He stressed that the situations in Afghanistan and Tajikistan are a source of concern and Kazakhstan is doing its best to play a stabilizing and conciliatory role in the region. I called on him and his Minister of Foreign Affairs Tokayev to continue to lend their full backing to your and Mr. Brahimi's efforts in bringing about a negotiated settlement of the Afghan conflict.

13. The growing flow of drugs, emanating from Afghanistan, through Tajikistan and Kazakhstan, is a threat to Kazakh society and Kazakhstan is working with other governments in the region to stem this flow.

14. Both Presidents Rakhmonov of Tajikistan and Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan were very grateful for the greetings I conveyed from you and expressed their appreciation for the assistance and support which the United Nations provided to their countries. Both expressed unqualified support for the reform process underway and spoke of the unique role of the United Nations in managing world affairs.



Sergio Vieira de Mello
13 July 1998

Copy: The Deputy Secretary-General ✓
Mr. Riza
Mr. Miyet
Mr. Prendergast
Mr. Speth
Mr. Brahimi
Mr. Toepfer
Mr. Kubiš

Noted
