

EU/NR 05/07: EU-AFGHANISTAN TROIKA: COMMISSIONER FERRERO-WALDNER TO PRESENT PACKAGE WORTH OVER €600 MILLION

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WALDNER TO PRESENT PACKAGE WORTH OVER €600 MILLION

European Commissioner for

External Relations,

Benita

Ferrero-

Waldner, will attend the Berlin on January 29. She will take the opportunity to present her plans for the next four years, with proposals for a package worth €600 million for Afghanistan for 2007-2010, with a focus on three key priority areas: reform of the justice sector, rural development including alternatives to poppy production and health. The European Commission remains one of the top donors in Afghanistan and one of the very few giving a multi-year commitment.

EU-Afghanistan

Ministerial Troika meeting in

"The EU is keeping its promises to Afghanistan," said Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner on the eve of the ministerial meeting. "The €1 billion pledge we made after the fall of the Taliban has been honored, and with this new package we are demonstrating our continuing commitment to help Afghanistan build a more secure and prosperous future."

"Afghanistan's problems cannot be solved without stronger governance and respect for the rule of law," she added. "The key challenges are to extend the Government's authority into the provinces, and to stamp out narcotics production which destabilizes the country politically and economically. That is why our new package will put a special focus on strengthening public administration and in particular on reform of the justice sector. Boosting the professionalism of the key legal institutions will complement the EU's work with the Afghan police & helping to improve law enforcement at all levels."

The EU-Afghanistan Troika agenda includes implementation of the Afghanistan Compact, the EU contribution to improving law and order in the country, counter-narcotics and regional developments including Afghan-Pakistan relations.

Rule of Law

As the largest donor to the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (€135 million since 2002), the Commission has already made a major contribution to supporting the salaries and training needs of the Afghan police, and this work will continue under the new package.

The Commission now intends to launch a new program of support to the justice sector. Over the next few months, the Commission will place experts in key justice institutions (Ministry of Justice, Supreme Court and the Attorney General's office) to draw up a major program of reforms in the judiciary and legal services in Afghanistan. The aim will be to improve the qualifications, recruitment and career structure for judges and prosecutors and to introduce a code of ethics.

Commission initiatives in this field complement the ESDP [European Security & Defense Policy] mission on policing, which is currently under consideration by EU Member States.

In addition to these activities in the justice sector, the Commission's new package will also support capacity-building in local and regional administration, with a view to increasing the focus on the rule of law in the provinces.

Rural Development

Law enforcement alone cannot solve the problem of poppy production. The Commission supports rural development programs in the northeast and east of Afghanistan, aiming to reduce poppy dependence through alternative livelihoods. Despite overall increases in opium cultivation in 2006, there were encouraging signs of sustained reductions in areas where the Commission has been active, for example in Nangarhar, once one of the main poppy-rich provinces. The Commission will continue its work in these provinces to ensure there is no return to poppy there.

Health

The European Commission is one of the three key donors to the health sector (with the World Bank and the US). The new package will continue to focus on provision of primary health services in Afghanistan. The aim is to help lift the coverage of basic health services from around 75% at present to near 100% by the end of 2010. Health clinics will be built or repaired and medical staff trained. To date, Commission funds have built over two hundred clinics.

For further information, please visit:

<http://www.eurunion.org/partner/euusterror/EUandAfghanistan.htm>

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