

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind



October 15, 2018

Change Agents: Youth Participation in Afghan National Parliament

Engaging young people in politics is critical to the safeguarding and strengthening of democracy in the country. Afghanistan has an estimated 31.6 million people that about 63.7 percent of them are under 25 years of age, that have a huge potential to bring positive changes in different areas. Thus, justice and democratic legitimacy demand more than a token youth presence in parliament. In addition, the presence of young people in political positions can change attitudes, eroding stereotypes about readiness or fitness to lead, while also encouraging young people to see politics as an arena open to their participation. Debates on youth participation in politics have traditionally focused more on young people's role as voters rather than on their election to political office. But as with gender equality – where the increased participation of women benefits society as a whole – the presence of young people in elected positions benefits all citizens and not just youth.

Youth Participation as Candidates

Though the youth constitute a high number of the Afghan population, they have been under-represented in the mid and high level of politics in the country. When the Taliban's regime was toppled by the international community, new opportunities were available for them to study and participate actively in different arenas. As a result, youth candidates constitute a major part of the candidates of the Afghan National Parliament Elections. Political analysts argue that if a considerable number of the youth candidates are voted, they will facilitate a generation transition that could pave the way for further fundamental reforms to strengthen the Afghan nascent democracy and empower national trust building.

Afghan educated youth acknowledge the modern scientific theories and also have not been involved in civil war in the country and can play a more effective and efficient role in the Afghan National Assembly. They can contribute to lessen the ethnic and religious gaps and work to develop Afghanistan and strengthen its new democracy.

Young female Candidates

Female candidates face multiple challenges as women running for public office in a highly conservative society. In addition to ongoing security concerns and public skepticism over the transparency of the entire process, women face widespread discrimination when it comes to political participation.

Traditional mores in Afghanistan are the main barriers against women even working outside the home, let alone running for public office. However, Presence of women candidates is one of the strong points of the forthcoming elections in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan that women face numerous socio-cultural challenges to run for public office, participation of many women candidates increase their chance to be included in the politics and political decision making processes. Though a large number of female candidates may not be voted, but their participation in the electoral process can decrease their marginalization and would help them to be recognized as the political influential figures to be mainstreamed in the society.

In sum, there is an urgent need for action by the Afghan government to address the underrepresentation of the Afghan young people in their membership. It requires Afghan authorities view the issue of youth participation in politics through the lens of youth representation in politics including in parliament. Further, male MPs have always outnumbered their female counterparts in every age group in the previous parliaments; as a result, it requires specific measures to be taken by the government, especially in terms of public awareness to motivate the people to vote to the female candidates for the Afghan National Parliament elections in order to have more female MPs in the next national Parliament.



The Latest Climate Science Must Mobilize Us, not Paralyze Us

By: Monica Araya & Carlos Manuel Rodriguez

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the United Nations body tasked with providing scientific evidence and consensus on climate change and its implications for decision-makers and the public, has just issued its latest, long-awaited report.

The challenge it presents to all of us is huge.

To avoid severe economic and social shocks and protect essential ecosystems, we urgently need to limit the increase in global temperature to within 1.5° Celsius of the pre-industrial level. Achieving the required reductions in greenhouse gas emissions will require boldness, creativity, and some hard choices. But Costa Rica's experience shows that, in the long run, what is gained far outweighs the sacrifices for all.

Climate change is not the first daunting challenge our country – among the world's most biodiverse countries per square meter – has had to overcome to preserve its natural beauty. Deforestation for cattle grazing nearly halved the land covered by forest over the four decades prior to 1986. Government investment in protecting these natural assets was essential, which meant eliminating subsidies for the cattle industry and perverse incentives for agrarian reform.

With subsidies and negative incentives gone, Costa Rica's cattle population dropped by a third, taking pressure off grazing lands. In the five decades since, forests have recovered and now cover more than half the country. And while forest cover doubled, Costa Rica's per capita income tripled. From this foundation, the economy has grown sustainably and the country has become a world leader in ecotourism.

Now, as this latest IPCC report makes clear, rising temperature is the new threat to both biodiversity and our economy. We all must combat it.

Costa Rica, for its part, has set what President Carlos Alvarado has called the "titanic and beautiful task" of decarbonizing the economy. One of the goals of the national decarbonization plan, which will be launched in December, is to ensure that the market properly accounts for the costs of climate change.

This policy has the effect of rendering fossil fuels economically uncompetitive – and creating incentives to use Costa Rica's nearly 100% renewable power in the transportation sector to cut our dependence on oil. A moratorium on oil and gas exploitation, respected by five different governments, reinforces these incentives. Making the energy sector work properly – an objective that unites both environmentalists and economists – means recognizing that a short-term economic boost cannot justify the long-term costs of fossil fuels.

As a minister and a climate activist, we both agree that government has an important role to play in achieving decarbonization. But the work of non-state actors such as local businesses and communities will also be essential. For this reason, government policy has focused on boosting community-based low-impact tourism initiatives that value local knowledge. The Costa Rican experience shows that environmental stewardship is a job done best by alliances between local people and national leaders, united by the common cause of conservation.

At its heart, Costa Rica's approach to climate change is about people, not industry and markets. Our commitment to tackling climate change is based on an understanding of the enormous health risks and costs that arise from inaction. Costa Rica devotes significant resources to tackling problems like dengue fever and malaria because our people remain our most important asset. And staying below the 1.5°C limit will mean 3.3 million fewer cases of dengue fever annually in Latin America and the Caribbean, fewer people at risk of malaria, and less food instability and poor nutrition caused by higher temperatures and unstable weather patterns.

Costa Rica is proud to be leading the world by putting this approach into practice. As a result, we are one of the few countries ready to exceed our commitments under the Paris climate agreement. Not all of the changes will be easy, and getting them right will require perseverance and a commitment to adaptability. Other countries that agreed as part of the Paris agreement to boost the ambition of their national climate plans by 2020 can learn from our experience in aiming for decarbonization, investing in natural assets, and recognizing the importance of the climate for a healthy population.

One of the most obvious lessons is the interdependence of these policies. Climate change is a collective problem, no single policy is enough, and no country can solve it alone. But this interdependence cannot be an excuse for paralysis. Limiting warming to 1.5° Celsius is a goal around which we can all unite in diverse ways.

Next month's Climate Vulnerable Forum will bring together leaders from the countries that are most vulnerable to climate change for the first entirely virtual summit of heads of state. Together with the next key intergovernmental meeting, COP24 in Poland this December, political leaders have an opportunity to prove they understand the science underpinning the IPCC report, and are ready to take ambitious steps to achieve the 1.5° target.

Unless all of us do so, the consequences will spare none of us.

Monica Araya is founder and Executive Director of Nivel, leads the citizens group Costa Rica Limpia, and is Vice President of Costa Rica's Electric Mobility Association. Carlos Manuel Rodriguez is the Costa Rican Minister of Environment and Energy.

Collective Efforts for Peace Process of Afghanistan

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Speaking at the 17th Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Tajikistan on Friday, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Abdullah Abdullah called for collective efforts of regional countries in the fight against terrorism. Abdullah said that terrorism remains the biggest "collective" challenge in the region and as a frontline state Afghanistan bears the bulk of the burden in the fight against terrorism and extremism," he said. He added Afghanistan is working with all involved nations including Pakistan, to eliminate the infrastructure and breeding grounds that help fund, recruit, train and deploy the human power and logistics to destabilize Afghanistan and the region as a whole. "The number of losses and casualties in Afghanistan speak for themselves," he said. "The presence of safe havens and co-networks supported through drug trafficking were essential and played the role of backbone for terrorist organizations.

"We continue to appeal our regional friends by stressing that fighting terrorism, extremism and separatism will require our collective efforts that needs close cooperation and coordination. But first, we need to make sure that we treat all forms of terrorism as one. We cannot make the mistake of differentiating between good and bad terrorism," he said. He said among the international terrorist groups that since 2014 found hideouts in Afghanistan, is the Islamic State or Daesh which the Afghan government sees it as a serious threat. "We use all means to identify and eliminate their foothold inside our country. Most of their recruits are non-Afghans, they are opportunistic in their dealings and affiliations with other militant groups including certain Taliban groupings," Abdullah said.

The CEO, Abdullah also welcomed the multinational regional meeting on counter-terrorism at the level of national security officials that was held in Tehran last month. He also appreciated the countries' contributions being made through the Hearth of Asia – Istanbul, and Kabul Processes conferences. "The National Unity Government in Afghanistan continues to promote an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation agenda," he said. "Earlier, this year, we presented a comprehensive plan for reconciliation and reintegration that was supported by the international community. Meanwhile, we will defend our citizens, their rights and achievements when attacked."

Abdullah said that the Afghan government has made every effort to provide an enabling environment for expanding the borders of trade, transit, communications, investment in energy transmission to fight poverty and unemployment by bringing the different segments of the region close to each other. He reiterated that Afghanistan is strongly committed to working closely with ECO to enhance cooperation in key areas of interest in order to pave the ground for a peaceful, stable and prosperous region.

In addition, he talked on the Afghan peace process, saying that Ka-

bul will continue its efforts to move the process forward. "The government of national unity in Afghanistan continues to promote and Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation agenda. Earlier this year, we presented a comprehensive plan for reconciliation and reintegration that was supported by the international community.

Meanwhile, Toby Lanzer, the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), said there are hopes for achieving peace in the country and that the organization will use all its resources for making a better future for Afghanistan. "Everybody that I have listened to whether it is a boy or a girl or a man or a woman, they have always said to me we want peace, we want to get through this terrible period in our history. We want Afghanistan to be a safe and secure place," Lanzer said. The UN official said the international community's cooperation will further help the efforts of the Afghan government for peace.

Thus, the U.S. envoy for Afghanistan peace efforts also reached to Qatar and met with Taliban representatives as president Donald Trump's administration pushed to find a way to end the 17-year-old Afghan war. Khalilzad, who is heading the envoy, trying bring Taliban to the negotiating table, is currently on his first trip as the special representative. However, it is the second time in four months that American officials have held face-to-face talks with Taliban representatives. In July, Alice Wells, the State Department deputy secretary for South and Central Asia, had met Taliban officials in Doha for what were described as talks about talks. The Taliban official who was part of the four-person delegation to that meeting said it produced "very positive signals." However, they stress on withdrawal of US forces from the country and the establishment of a government in Kabul that reflects the group's view of Islam.

Khalilzad also met with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani. The two sides discussed ways of achieving peace and stability in Afghanistan and Qatar's role in the peace process in the country. During the meeting, they reviewed bilateral relations between the two friendly countries as well as efforts exerted in Afghanistan. According to media reports, the meeting was attended by a number of officials including Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir. Though no more details have been revealed about the outcome of the two side meetings yet.

It is said that Khalilzad, finally, plans to return to Kabul for further consultations with Afghan leaders in the near future. However, before visiting Qatar, he started his peace mission by visiting Afghanistan and Pakistan to convince Islamabad to work with Afghan government in its efforts for reconciliation with the Taliban group.

Mohammad Zahir Akbari is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at mohammadzahirakbari@gmail.com



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Moh. Reza Huwaida
Vice Chairman / Exec. Editor: Moh. Sakhi Rezaie
Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com
Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019
www.outlookafghanistan.net



The views and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not reflect the views or opinions of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan.