

Summary of the Foreign Ministry's reply to “Key proposals of NGOs operating in Afghanistan” at the meeting

Detail of the meeting:

- Date of meeting: 22nd of July 2009 (Thu.) 10:30am-11:30am
- Place: Room Number 575 in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs South Building
- Participants:
Katsuhiko TAKAHASHI: Minister of Japanese embassy in Iraq, a former Director of the Second Middle East division, Middle Eastern and African Affairs Bureau in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Tsutomu NAKAGAWA: Director of the Second Middle East division, Middle Eastern and African Affairs Bureau in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Other relevant people from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Hiroshi TANIYAMA: Japan International Volunteer Center (JVC) President
Takatoshi HASEBE: JVC Afghanistan representative, Director of Afghanistan section
Yuko TANIYAMA: JVC Assistant to Afghanistan section

Subjects of discussion:

1. Comments on “Key proposals of NGOs operating in Afghanistan” from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Katsuhiko TAKAHASHI)
2. Supplementary explanation about view points of NGOs operating in Afghanistan (Hiroshi TANIYAMA)
3. Afghanistan field report (Takatoshi HASEBE)
4. Opinion exchange

Summary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs's reply to “Key proposals of NGOs operating in Afghanistan”:

It has been pointed out that there are problems in the humanitarian aid provided by Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), and this is putting NGO staff in danger. We would like to highlight this as a great concern. However, with the increasing unrest in Afghanistan, military protection of humanitarian aid programs may become necessary. Still, we would like to continue exploring a better way.

There are various opinions about PRT, but it has accomplished certain level of reconstruction, especially in distributing peace in remote areas. Reconstruction works often tend to concentrate on the capital city. Thus the Japanese government does consider cooperation with PRT is necessary to extend reconstruction to remote areas, which have higher needs of this assistance. As one method to accomplish more suitable aid, we dispatched civilians to the Lithuanian PRT. We have been informed that a relationship with the local people is maintained peaceful, and we would like to continue reflecting local needs as much as possible in this style.

We take the problem of “civilian/military confusion” as an opinion from NGOs, and we are looking to take a suitable action. To prevent civilians from being mixed-up with military, it is essential that PRT put an effort towards clarifying to the local population that their work is aid, rather than a military operation. At least we are informed that in the Ghowr province, the Lithuanian PRT is successful in this regard, and a relationship with NGOs and local people is maintained.

Key discussion:

HASEBE (JVC): Japan has been taking a peaceful approach to Afghanistan by focusing on humanitarian aid and not sending self-defense forces, and this has been appreciated by local people. Why have you decided to change that approach?

TAKAHASHI: The government has been considering how to contribute to reconstruction of regions

with unstable order, by not relying on self defense forces. Sending civilians to PRT is a decision made under the consideration.

(Documented by Yuko TANIYAMA ; Japanese version)
(Translated by Toshihiro CHIGIRA)