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From: OpsNewsTicker
Sent: Sunday, December 04, 2011 07:19 AM
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Subject: Afghans need decade of help, Karzai says before Bonn talks (Reuters)

BERLIN (Reuters) - President Hamid Karzai appealed to delegates at talks on the future of Afghanistan to support his nation with financial and military aid for a decade after troops withdraw to ensure a stable future, in a magazine interview on Sunday.

The conference in the German city of Bonn, which starts on Monday, takes place a decade after a first Bonn conference on Afghanistan which ended in high hopes for its future.

With concern about security after international troops leave at the end of 2014, poverty a major problem for many Afghans and a drugs trade that is still thriving, the mood is sober.

The conference suffered a blow when Afghanistan's neighbour Pakistan withdrew from the meeting in response to a cross-border attack by NATO that killed 24 of its soldiers and plunged U.S.-Pakistani relations deeper into crisis.

"Afghanistan will certainly need help for another 10 years -- until around 2024... we will need training for our own troops. We will need equipment for the army and police and help to set up state institutions," Karzai told Der Spiegel weekly.

"If we lose this fight, we are threatened with a return to a situation like that before Sept. 11, 2011," warned Karzai, referring to Taliban rule.

German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle said the Bonn talks would focus on three areas -- security in light of the planned handover to domestic forces, internal reconciliation and long-term support from world nations.

Karzai said his country needed a big financial commitment.

A World Bank study released last month said Afghanistan was likely to need around \$7 billion a year from the international community to help pay its security and other bills long after foreign troops leave.

PAKISTAN IN SPOTLIGHT

Karzai criticised Pakistan for its lack of help in achieving reconciliation. "Until now they have refused to

help with talks with the Taliban leadership," he told Der Spiegel, adding some people wanted the Taliban to remain an influence in Afghanistan.

"If that doesn't change, there won't be talks," he said.

Hopes for an appearance by Taliban representatives at the Bonn talks and a breakthrough on reconciliation have faded.

But Germany's Westerwelle said Pakistan still wanted stability in Afghanistan despite its boycott of the talks.

"I have the impression Pakistan not only wants to cooperate in Afghanistan's stabilisation process but that it is in its own interests," he said in an interview with Deutschlandfunk radio.

Wajid Shamsul Hasan, Pakistan's High Commissioner to Britain, said Pakistan wanted peace in its neighbouring country.

"(Pakistani Prime Minister Yousaf Raza) Gilani ... has reiterated that Pakistan strongly supports stability, peace and prosperity in Afghanistan and remains bound by international efforts for Afghanistan's development," he wrote in an email.

Earlier this week, the High Commissioner told Reuters the attack had pushed Pakistan's government into a corner.

"The government and armed forces have been pushed to the wall," he said, adding the attack had outraged the whole nation.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton spoke to Gilani on Saturday, offering condolences for the loss of life, and stressed the United State's commitment to working together in future.z

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