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## **UKRAINIANS ARE THE CLOSEST PEOPLE TO ME**

I would like to begin by saying that I have felt myself Ukrainian for a long time. As a student, I attended a Ukrainian university. Then I moved to my country, where I worked as a university professor and chairman of trade in several provinces. In 2004, I became a member of the lower house of our parliament and, subsequently, Deputy Speaker. After that, I went into opposition. A few years later, I became an economic representative of Afghanistan in South Korea. Then, I participated in elections and supported the candidacy of the president. I also ran as a candidate for the post of Minister for Economy but was appointed senior political adviser to Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Prime Minister. Later, I was sent to Ukraine. Why to Ukraine? First of all, to further improve relations between Ukraine and Afghanistan. I studied in Ukraine and felt like Ukrainian, so I could bring some added value to the relations between our countries. Our President, despite some previous contradictions between us, is a very good man, who works for Afghanistan and wants to establish good relations with all countries.

I have already been working as Ambassador of Afghanistan to Ukraine and Moldova for two years. The Embassy employs a total of 20 staff members, including five diplomats. We have a consular section as well as Ukraine is home for nearly 15,000 people of Afghan origin. By the way, among those five diplomats, we have a woman who works as a Consul. Moreover, our Constitution stipulates that 30 percent of all deputies shall be women. Out of 25 Ministers, four are women. There are also many female deputy ministers. Women are the closest people, like mother, wife, and sister. They are very important to us. We respect and love them. Hence, they should have a say in politics and participate in the government.

For the first time in the 26-year history of our diplomatic mission, a large delegation headed by the Minister of Trade and Industry of Afghanistan will pay a visit to Ukraine. It will consist of nine members, including another Minister and Deputy Ministers. Many Ukrainian deputies visited Afghanistan. We are exerting efforts to somehow open the Ukrainian Embassy in Kabul, which still isn't there, as they say, for economic reasons, i.e. lack of finance. At any rate, we hope that our delegation will succeed in negotiations and forge new good agreements. We also entertain the hope to start a very close economic cooperation.



*Делегація з Афганістану після зустрічі з українськими колегами  
A delegation from Afghanistan after meeting with Ukrainian colleagues*

Nonetheless, we are already leveraging the expertise of Ukrainian specialists and engaging them as highly qualified specialists. We are building a gas pipeline through Afghanistan to India and the contribution of technical workers from Ukraine would be highly desirable. Many Ukrainians in Afghanistan work as staff members of the NATO mission and organizations responsible for building roads and hydroelectric power plants. We put very much faith in Ukraine. We provide visas every month to dozens of Ukrainians for working in Afghanistan. In particular, we have employed more than 300 specialists.

There are people who want to see Afghanistan, because it is a very interesting country due to the fact that no one can defeat it. The first attempt was the war with Alexander the Great, who is said to have attacked Afghanistan but failed to conquer it. One of the 34 provinces of Afghanistan is called Nuristan inhabited by the people who settled there at the time of the Alexander's conquest. Now their number has reached more than 100,000 people. The Soviet Union also intervened in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, 50,000 Soviet soldiers, including Ukrainians, were killed and more than 100,000 were wounded. However, they did not manage to conquer Afghanistan. Much to my regret, the war in Afghanistan is still persisting.

For me, Ukraine is the second homeland and I wholeheartedly love your country as I do mine. Why? Because Ukrainian people are very hospitable with a high cultural level. I have been to about fifty countries and I appreciate Ukrainians, because they are honest and simple, and, of course, possess great scientific and technical potential, which allows them to work all around the world. Ukrainians work even in Afghanistan, despite the ongoing war.

Ukrainians are one of the closest people to me. And the recent elections have shown that Ukrainians are very decisive people. A person who had nothing to do with politics with zero political experience was elected President with 73 percent of votes. Only decisive people can do that.

Diplomacy is a set of relations. If you do not build good relations, you will never strengthen Ukraine's position in the international arena. In the same fashion, if I don't build a good relationship with you, I will never strengthen the position of Afghanistan. Therefore, for Ukraine, in my opinion, we need a lot of effort to be able to successfully conduct diplomacy.

From the vantage point of humanness, if you want one very important person to always remain your friend, be ready for losses, if need be. If, for instance, a country wants to construct friendly relations with another country, it will take a lot of time and effort to respect and value these links. It is incumbent upon us to regulate our relations so that both parties can remain satisfied. Experience shows that to lose friendship is far easier than build a long-lasting partnership. Therefore, our Embassy has been in Ukraine for 25 years and we are still committed to strengthening our relations.

To crown it all, I would like to note that I sincerely believe in the Ukrainian people, its culture, and spiritual power. I hope that the war in your country will soon be brought to an end for you to start strengthening your position in the international arena with renewed vigour.