## *Developing Practical Cooperation through Science*

**The NATO Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme is open to scientists and experts from Afghanistan.**

The NATO SPS Programme enables close collaboration on issues of common interest to enhance the security of NATO and partner nations by facilitating international efforts to meet emerging security challenges, supporting NATO-led operations and missions, and advancing early warning and forecasting for the prevention of disasters and crises.

The current SPS Key Priorities include:

- *Counter-Terrorism;*
- *Energy Security;*
- *Cyber Defence;*
- *Defence against CBRN Agents;*
- *Environmental Security;*
- *Security-related Advanced Technology;*
- *Border and Port Security;*
- *Human and Social Aspects of Security*.

Additionally, the SPS Programme helps to promote *regional security* through scientific cooperation among partners. The Programme also helps to *prepare* interested eligible nations for NATO membership. SPS activities often have a high *public diplomacy* value.

# AFGHANISTAN

At the NATO Lisbon Summit in November 2010, NATO and Afghanistan reaffirmed their continuing bond with the signing of a Declaration on Enduring Partnership. The document, which marks NATO's continued commitment to Afghanistan, provided a political framework for enhanced cooperation, particularly in the field of Afghan National Security Forces capacity-building and security sector reform. At the NATO Brussels Summit in July 2018, NATO, Afghanistan, and Resolute Support Contributing Partners issued a Joint Statement reaffirming their shared commitment to Afghanistan's long-term security and stability. The SPS Programme supports these efforts through the provision of cooperation based on civil science, technology and innovation.

## Cooperative Activities

**SILK-Afghanistan Programme**

Named after the Great Silk Road trading route linking Asia and Europe, the SILK-Afghanistan project provided high-speed internet access via satellite and fibre optics to 34 Afghan universities and a number of other academic and governmental institutions in Kabul. The network became operational at Kabul University in 2006, and has since been expanded to other provinces. SILK-Afghanistan was jointly funded by the NATO SPS Programme and the US Department of State with further financing provided by the European Commission. In addition to connectivity, it helped to build IT infrastructure and to train IT staff at the universities. Today, the vast majority of university students and lecturers from more than 30 universities in Kabul and Afghan provinces are connected to the information highway through the SILK-Afghanistan project.



**www.nato.int/science**

**SILK-Afghanistan 2.0**

In May 2013, the second phase of the SILK-Afghanistan Programme was launched. This new phase included a contract between Afghan Telecom and NATO for a high-speed fibre-optic link to Europe, as well as a contract with another Afghan company to provide internet access via microwave radio technology to universities not yet connected to the fibre-optics network. This new phase marked a shift from satellite use towards fibre-optic communications; a more sustainable solution for internet provision. This shift also helped to prepare for the handover of the network to a European Commission (EC) funding mechanism, the TEIN4 network (Trans-Eurasia Information Network, phase 4) in summer 2016.



*Former Assistant Secretary General of NATO's Public Diplomacy Division (PDD) during an inauguration ceremony in Afghanistan in October 2011.*

Within the framework of SILK-Afghanistan, NATO has been working with the Afghan Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) since 2012 to set up an **"Afghanistan Research and Education Network"** (AfgREN). AfgREN allowed Afghan students and researchers to hold international video teleconferences (VTCs). It provided distance learning capabilities; the ability to broadcast and receive lectures; access to a digital library, virtual laboratories, and other research materials; and provided Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) telephone services, along with the greater opportunity for Afghanistan to join larger regional and international research networks.
*This activity was led by Afghanistan and the United States.* [ref. G4868].

20 **Networking Infrastructure Grants** have also been awarded to Afghan universities and the MoHE as part of the SILK-Afghanistan Programme. These grants provided the financial means to cable buildings, to connect them to campus networks and to install PC pools for use by lecturers, students and administrative staff. They helped to improve teaching and learning facilities in Afghanistan, including cooperation with other universities worldwide.

In January and February 2015, a training course on **Network and Internet Security Assurance for Nationwide Community Connectivity** trained 35 Afghans in Bishkek/Kyrgyzstan. Trainees learned how to install, operate, and verify a basic network, including configuring switches and routers, identifying basic security threats and troubleshooting common network issues. Participants also obtained an overview of network services and operation systems, including through hands-on sessions.
*This activity was led by the United States and Afghanistan* [ref. G4880]*.*

In December 2017, the Multi-Year Project **Cross-Cultural Training for Military Cadets** was completed. Led by Afghanistan and the US, the project put NATO-country military cadets directly in contact with Afghan university students via facilitated VTC sessions. These sessions helped to create mutual cultural awareness, including both among the officers to be deployed, and among the Afghan civilians who were often speaking to a soldier directly for the first time.
*This activity was led by Afghanistan and the United States.* [ref. G4746]*.*



*Dutch Military Cadets engage in a dialogue with Afghan civilians via VTC.*