



Legislative Newsletter

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NEWS:

Afghan National Assembly Resumes Sitting

Afghan lawmakers returned to work following their six-weeklong winter recess this week when President Hamid Karzai officially inaugurated the new year's legislative term by opening a joint session of both houses of Parliament on 21 January. In the days immediately following, both houses conducted internal house elections for leadership positions, including legislative committee chairpersons.

Wolesi Jirga (WJ)

The Lower House held its first plenary session on 22 January following the previous day's joint session in which both houses officially started the new legislative term. Welcoming back members from their winter break, Speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahim (Kunduz) said, "I hope you met your constituents and brought back reports to be presented either in the plenary or submitted to the admin board. Our priority today is to elect the new WJ Admin Board."

Despite Speaker Ibrahim's intention, leadership elections had to be delayed a day due to lack of quorum resulting from inclement weather conditions. Polls for the four top posts were held on the following day. Three candidates – Mr. Haji Abdul Zahir Qadir (Nangarhar), Mr. Nader Khan Katawazai (Paktika) and Mr. Abdul Rahim Ayoubi (Kandahar) – initially nominated themselves for the first deputy speaker's position. Mr. Ayoubi later withdrew from the race to support Mr. Katawazai. For any of the two candidates to be declared first deputy speaker, they had to draw a majority (50% plus 1) 106 of the total 210 votes cast.

Speaker Ibrahim declared Mr. Qadir duly elected for the house's second leadership post after he garnered 140 votes ahead of Mr. Katawazai who received 46 votes. There were 16 blank ballots and 8 abstentions.

In the race for the Second Deputy Speaker's position Mr. Ahmad Shah Behzad polled 72 votes, Mr. Jafar Mehdawee 55 and Mr. Mohammad Abdu 52. There were 11 abstentions and 20 blank ballots.

Mr. Abdul Satar Khawasee received 105 votes in the contest for the Secretary's post while his contestant, Mr. Dr. Zahir Saddat managed 66 votes in a poll which had 13 members abstaining and 26 blank ballots.

Mr. Farhad Azimi led the Deputy Secretary's race with 104 votes ahead of Mr. Qais Hassan who received 81 votes. Seven members abstained and there were 18 blank ballots.

Since none of the candidates for the remaining three leadership posts reached the required majority vote after the first round of voting, Speaker Ibrahimy called for a run-off to be held on 24 January between the two candidates who received the highest number of votes from the first round. In the second round, 217 MPs cast their votes resulting in Mr. Azimi declared deputy secretary after garnering 114 votes; his rival Mr. Hassan received just 76 votes. There were 8 abstentions and 19 blank ballots.

Again, results for the second deputy speaker and secretary were inconclusive and a third round vote was called, pitting the same candidates in round two. Mr. Khawasee won 108 of the 205 votes and was declared the new secretary. There was, however, yet another deadlock in the election of the second deputy speaker prompting Speaker Ibrahimy to call for new polls on 25 January involving new candidates.

Five candidates nominated themselves for the fresh second deputy speaker poll. In the first round Mr. Ahmad Shah Ramazan (Balkh) polled 59 votes with Ms. Shah Gul Rezayee (Ghazni) close on his heels with 55 votes. Mr. Saleh Mohammad Saljogi (Herat) came third with 44 votes while Mr. Ghulam Farooq Majroh (Herat) received 36 votes and Ms. Nafisa Azimi (Ghazni) managed 7. There were 2 blank ballots and 7 abstentions.

A second round between Mr. Ramazan and Ms. Rezayee (Ghazni), again failed to produce a clear winner and a third round will be conducted on 28 January.

Meshrano Jirga (MJ)

Speaker Fazel Hadi Muslimyar (Nangarhar) chaired the MJ first plenary session on 21 January and presided over house leadership elections. Incumbents retained all the four positions:

Mr. Mohammad Alam Izedyar (Panjshir) was reelected First Deputy Speaker while Mr. Haji Rafiulla Gul Afghan (Kabul) retained his position of Second Deputy Speaker. Mr. Mawlavi Abdul Wali Rajee (Baghlan) was voted Secretary and Mr. Sayed Azizullah Ulfati (Jawzjan) will be his Deputy.

Meshrano Jirga Selects Committee Leaders

The Upper House this week selected leadership teams for eleven of the twelve legislative committees. Five new committee chairpersons were chosen, while 6 retained their leadership position. Significantly only one committee, the Civic Society and Women's Affairs Committee, will be chaired by a woman. Following is the list of committee chairpersons elected this week.

1. Religious Affairs, Higher Education, Education, Cultural and Scientific Researches Affairs

Mr. Mirhamdullah Muneeb (Parwan) - (Chairman)

2. National Economy, Finance and Budget

Mr. Mawlavi Abdulwahab Irfan (Takhar) -Chairman (incumbent)

3. Legislative, Justice and Judiciary

Hafiz Abdul Qayuum (Nuristan)– Chairman (formerly Deputy Chairman)

4. Ethnical/Tribal, Frontiers and Koochies (Nomads) Affairs.

Mr. Lutfullah Baba (Nangarhar) - Chairman

5. Handicapped, Disabled, Dependents of the Martyrs and the Refugees

Mr. Sadat Nasari (Daikundi)- Chairman (incumbent)

6. Complaints and Petitions

Dr. Zalmi Zabuli (Zabul)- Chairman (incumbent)

7. Internal Security, Defense Affairs and Local Organs

Mr. Hajj Mohammad Amin Safi (Kunar) - Chairman

8. Civil Society and Women Affairs

Mrs. Sediqa Balkhi (Appointee)-Chairwoman

9. International Relations

Mr. Arefullah Pashtoon (Khost) - Chairman (incumbent)

10. Transportation, Telecommunications (Urban Development, Civil Aviation, Working Resource, Kabul Municipality, Housing Affairs, Water and Energy Supply)

Mr. Jawed Rauf (Herat)- Chairman (incumbent)

11. Provincial/District Councils and Immunities and Privileges of the House

Mr. Mukaram Khan Naseri (Langman)- Chairman (incumbent)