



Afghanistan

Expected Council Action

In March the Council is expected to renew the UNAMA mandate ahead of its 23 March expiry and to receive a briefing from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations followed by a debate. Members are currently discussing possible adjustments to UNAMA's mandate, taking into account the conclusions of the London Conference on Afghanistan. The Secretary-General's latest report, expected on 12 March, is likely to contain recommendations for refocusing UNAMA's mandate.

Key Recent Developments

On 28 January, Afghan president Hamid Karzai, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, co-hosted in London an international conference on Afghanistan. Sixty-six countries participated. The Conference stressed the need for greater Afghan ownership of the peace and development process. One notable feature of the outcome document was that it demonstrated a model of an integrated peacemaking/peacekeeping/peacebuilding strategy which could be utilised as a framework by the Council in other cases. (The Council has recently recognised in a February presidential statement on peacekeeping the importance of simultaneously supporting political, security, rule of law and peacebuilding activities (S/PRST/2010/2).)

The London Conference highlighted:

- a plan to transfer security responsibility from international to Afghan control, possibly by late 2010 or early 2011;
- targets for a major increase in Afghan national security force numbers and an increase in international forces to support the training of Afghan forces;
- commitments to better-coordinated development assistance, to be increasingly channelled through the Afghan government;
- support for the Afghan government's national reconciliation programme, including financial support for a peace and reintegration trust fund; and
- support for increased regional cooperation.

Participants also noted that until the Afghan government was ready to take over, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) would continue to be the primary international organisation for coordinating international support.

In a 5 February press statement the Council voiced support for the priorities agreed to at the London Conference. It also underlined the leading role of UNAMA in coordinating international civilian efforts in Afghanistan.

On 26 February the Taliban claimed responsibility for a suicide and car bomb attack close to a shopping area, hotel and guesthouses. The attacks which appeared targeted at foreigners killed at least 18 people including French, Italian and Indian nationals. The Secretary-General and UNAMA strongly condemned the attacks. This was the second coordinated attack by the Taliban in Kabul since the start of the year. On 18 January they attacked government buildings, a shopping center and the presidential palace.

On 25 January the Security Council Al-Qaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee removed five ex-Taliban officials from its sanctions list, established by resolution 1267.

On 24 January Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission announced it would delay Afghanistan's parliamentary election from 22 May to 18 September. It cited a lack of funds, logistical challenges and continued insecurity as reasons for the delay. The UN welcomed the decision as it allows for more preparation time.

A legislative decree which came into effect on 13 February gives Karzai the right to choose the five members of the Electoral Complaint Commission (ECC), which oversees voting irregularities. Before this change three of the seats were held by foreigners appointed by the UN. The move has been criticised by Afghan opposition parties.

On 13 February NATO and Afghan forces began Operation Moshtarak, focused on southern Afghanistan. It is the largest military operation by pro-government forces since 2001.

In Pakistan, intensified action against Afghan Taliban resulted in the capture of several, including on 8 February Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, a senior Taliban leader.

On 26 January the Secretary-General announced the appointment of Staffan de Mistura as his new Special Representative for Afghanistan and Head of UNAMA as of 1 March 2010. He replaces Kai Eide, who served in the position for two years.

The Secretary-General and Eide briefed the Council on 6 January. The Secretary-General said Afghanistan was at a critical juncture. Eide identified the negative trends in Afghanistan but outlined a political strategy prioritising civilian institution-building.

The fourth trilateral summit between Turkey, Afghanistan and Pakistan took place on 25 January in Istanbul. These summits are aimed at strengthening cooperation mechanisms between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

On 26 January a Regional Summit on Afghanistan organised by Turkey was held also in Istanbul with Afghanistan, China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Turkmenistan participating.

UNAMA's 2009 report on protection of civilians in armed conflict in Afghanistan, published in January, reported a 14 percent rise in civilian deaths in 2009. Deaths caused by anti-government elements increased by 41 percent while those attributed to pro-government forces fell by 28 percent.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime report, based on farmer's planting intentions, issued in February said that Afghanistan's opium cultivation is unlikely to change dramatically this year. It also projected a decrease in opium production due to bad weather.

The Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict visited Afghanistan from 20 February to 26 February to assess the situation and to follow-up on commitments made during her July 2008 visit and the July 2009 conclusions from the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Human Rights-Related Developments

Meeting in Geneva on 5 February, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women urged the Afghan government and its international allies "to ensure that women representatives are included in the upcoming peace and development dialogues and negotiations with the Taliban". The Committee pointed out that there are two Security Council resolutions that underscore the importance of women's active participation in all peacebuilding efforts and recovery. The Committee also drew attention to the new personal status law of the Shiite minorities, which it saw as especially discriminatory against women.

Key Issues

Issues related to UNAMA's mandate include:

- adjusting UNAMA's mandate so that it fully reflects the recent decisions on Afghanistan in London including the progressive assumption of leadership by Kabul;
- ensuring that UNAMA's aid coordinating role is clearly emphasised;
- invigorating better coordination and delivery of civilian aid and the extent to which overall civilian coordination should come under UNAMA's umbrella; and
- whether UNAMA should be involved in the reconciliation and reintegration process with the Taliban.

Underlying Problems

Key underlying problems clearly include better coordination of the security situation in Afghanistan. Safety and security of UN staff may become a pressing issue.

Similarly, although there is now very wide recognition of the need for a political process and reconciliation the role the UN could play in such a process remains fluid.

UN support for the parliamentary elections is also controversial. Some members feel that it is premature and that a specific request and details of proposed electoral reform from the Afghan government are needed before making any decisions. Related to this is the role of the ECC. Karzai's decree giving him total control over this body is likely to complicate the issue.

A very practical underlying problem is the high vacancy rate in UNAMA. This is a result largely of generic recruiting practices within the UN system and the lack of security in Afghanistan. A related issue is whether countries will be allowed to second personnel to UNAMA temporarily to help alleviate this problem.

Options

Renewal of UNAMA's mandate prior to 23 March seems a given but there are a range of options relating to strengthening and clarifying its tasks, particularly:

- UNAMA's lead role in aid coordination;
- reconciliation and reintegration; and
- UNAMA's role in the parliamentary elections (in respect of the electoral assistance role there are a number of sub-options including a commitment in principle but with precise details to be resolved by a defined date).

Other options for the resolution include:

- requesting the Secretary-General to refine the benchmarks and indicators of progress produced in September 2009;
- requesting the Secretary-General to provide a report on lessons learnt from the 2009 presidential election to improve the electoral process for the parliamentary and district council elections and specific recommendations by May for an electoral assistance programme for the September parliamentary voting;
- encouraging the Secretary-General to reorganise UNAMA to reflect new priorities and, in his efforts, to find solutions to UNAMA's staffing problems;
- exhorting member states to assist the Secretariat to move swiftly to help fill positions in UNAMA;
- inviting de Mistura and the EU and NATO civilian coordinators to an informal meeting to discuss how to make civilian aid coordination more effective; and
- confirming an early Council visit to Afghanistan.

Council Dynamics

Most members agree that while fundamental changes to UNAMA's mandate are unnecessary, it needs to be refocused to reflect current priorities.

There appears to be some consensus on strengthening UNAMA's coordination role, but in other areas members have not formed definite positions. There are, however, some areas of interest members are likely to want to see highlighted in UNAMA's new mandate. The UK is expected to want the themes from the London Conference included in the resolution. Japan, having contributed to the reintegration fund, may be interested in language on reintegration and reconciliation. Other members, such as Austria, are keen to have the importance of the rule of law reflected. Bosnia and Herzegovina, drawing on its past, is concerned about internally displaced persons and the importance of institution building.

One of the more controversial areas for members is that of reconciliation and UNAMA's possible role. Agreement may be difficult on this issue, particularly given Russia's strong views and the mixed signals from the US. Although Russia allowed five Taliban to be removed from the 1267 list in January, it seems that its position on dialogue with leaders of the Taliban has not changed fundamentally.

Some members may raise the issue of protection of civilians, following the recent incident in southern Afghanistan and the ongoing offensive.

Another area that is likely to see lively discussion is whether the September date will allow enough time for credible elections. This will also play into discussion of UNAMA's role in the forthcoming parliamentary elections, particularly in light of the recent decree relating to the ECC.

Turkey is the lead country on Afghanistan. It is planning a number of different initiatives, among them a Council visit to Afghanistan later this year and a retreat of Council members in late June, possibly in Turkey, which will feature Afghanistan as one of the topics discussed.

UN Documents

Selected Security Council Resolutions

- S/RES/1890 (8 October 2009) extended International Security Assistance Force's (ISAF) mandate until 13 October 2010.
- S/RES/1868 (23 March 2009) extended UNAMA's mandate until 23 March 2010 and asked for reports with benchmarks every three months.
- S/RES/1401 (28 March 2002) created UNAMA.

Selected Secretary-General's Report

- S/2009/674 (28 December 2009)

Other

- S/PRST/2010/2 (12 February 2010) was the presidential statement on peacekeeping.
- SC/9858 (5 February 2010) was the press statement on the London Conference.
- S/2010/70 (3 February 2010) was the Istanbul Statement.
- S/2010/65 (2 February 2010) was the communiqué from the London Conference.
- S/2010/47 (26 January 2010) and S/2010/48 (27 January 2010) were letters regarding the appointment of Staffan de Mistura as new Special Representative for Afghanistan.
- S/2010/35 (19 January 2010) was the ISAF report covering August to October 2009.
- S/PV.6255 (6 January 2010) was the Council debate on Afghanistan.
- S/AC.51/2009/1 (13 July 2009) was the conclusions on children and armed conflict in Afghanistan.

Other Relevant Facts

Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNAMA's Head of Mission

Staffan de Mistura (Sweden)

UNAMA: Size, Composition and Duration

- *Strength (as of 31 December 2009)*: 339 international civilians, 1,298 local civilians, 17 military observers, three civilian police, 53 UN volunteers
- *Duration*: 28 March 2002 to present; mandate expires on 23 March 2010

ISAF Military Commander

Army General Stanley McChrystal (US)

ISAF: Size, Composition and Duration

- *Total strength*: about 85,795 troops
- *Contributors of military personnel*: 43 NATO and non-NATO countries
- *Current top contributors*: US, UK, Germany, France, Italy and Canada
- *Duration*: 20 December 2001 to present; mandate expires on 13 October 2010

Operation Enduring Freedom: Size, Composition and Duration

- *Current strength*: 13,500 (this is an estimate as the troop numbers shift continuously)
- *Top contributor*: US
- *Duration*: 7 October 2001 to present

Useful Additional Sources

- *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2010, Winter Rapid Assessment*, UNODC, February 2010.
- *Afghanistan: Annual Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, 2009.