

## Security Council Open Debate on UNAMA, March 19<sup>th</sup> 2013, Security Council Chamber

*Statement by Mr. Tanin, Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations.*

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's important meeting, which includes the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) mandate. I also wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency for the month of March.

We convey our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his remarks, his presence and his report (S/2013/133), which provides a comprehensive picture of the situation on the ground. I also extend my appreciation to Special Representative Kubiš for joining us today. And I wish to thank the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Carr, for honouring us with his presence and participation.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Council for the spirit of cooperation and openness shown during the course of negotiations. A special thanks goes to Ambassador Quinlan and his team at the Australian Mission to the United Nations for the able manner in which they led the process.

In just two days, on 21 March, the Afghan New Year will begin, a year in which transition to full Afghan responsibility is central to our efforts, a year that will take us to the next elections, a year to bring an end to war, and a year for building confidence and resilience.

Since the adoption of the UNAMA mandate last year, Afghanistan and the international community have placed a new focus on the needs of the transition period, which involves strengthening peace and security and the realization of national priorities. Together with the international community, we developed the parameters of future cooperation to ensure the building of a peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan that is able to stand on its own feet. We did that through continuing dialogue with our partners and agreements made at the NATO Summit in Chicago last May, at the Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference in Kabul in June and at the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan in July. More will need to be done to crystallize all aspects of cooperation between Afghanistan and the international community, including the shaping of our relations within the region.

A successful and orderly transition to Afghan ownership and leadership is about a continuous focus on five priority areas.

First, strengthening Afghan national sovereignty and national ownership and leadership are central to transition. After more than a decade of shared efforts, the strengthening of sovereignty entails normalization through security, political and economic transition. For the Afghan people, national sovereignty means taking full responsibility for their destiny.

With the announcement of the fourth tranche of the transition in December 2012, the assumption of full security responsibility by Afghan forces is more tangible than ever. By the end of that stage, 87 per cent of the Afghan population will be living in areas where Afghan security forces are in charge of security.

The Afghan people are keenly focused on a successful political transition, and all eyes are on the election next spring. The Government of Afghanistan is committed to fair, democratic, transparent and inclusive elections in which the men and women of Afghanistan will again shape their political future. Preparations for the elections are well under way. There is an overwhelming consensus that a successful and credible election will be necessary for stability and lasting peace.

At the same time, peace talks and reconciliation with the armed opposition are essential for a successful election. The Afghan Government is doing its utmost to ensure the success of the reconciliation process. The High Peace Council recently took the necessary steps to galvanize the reconciliation efforts. The support of the international community, and in particular of some countries in the region, is important for an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned reconciliation process. As we work to move the peace process forward, the role of the Security Council will remain imperative. We welcome the adoption of resolution 2082 (2012), which refined the Taliban sanctions regime in view of Afghanistan's leadership of the reconciliation process.

Secondly, during transition and the decade of transformation to follow, the relationship between Afghanistan and our international partners will evolve. Strategic partnership agreements, such as those we finalized in the past two years, are key for shaping long-term relationships and for stability during the transition and beyond. Afghanistan has established bilateral strategic partnerships with a number of countries, including the agreement between Afghanistan and the United States signed in May, which was followed by the recognition of Afghanistan as a major non-NATO ally of the United States. Talks are ongoing to conclude the security agreement between the two countries, which will be finalized in due course. Just last month, we signed a strategic partnership with Norway. We are now defining the parameters of similar partnerships with Denmark and Finland. With the transition, Afghanistan is entering a new era of relations with international partners. We are committed to basing our strategic cooperation on bilateral frameworks, which is an important step towards the normalization of the situation.

Our close partnership with NATO has been a significant source of progress for stabilization efforts. We look forward to furthering our partnership into the transformation decade ahead. In that context, we welcome the important discussions that took place at the meetings of the NATO North Atlantic Council at the level of Defence Ministers held in Brussels on 21 to 22 February, where NATO took concrete steps towards planning improved capabilities and reinforced its commitment to the NATO post-2014 role of training, advising and assisting Afghan National Security Forces. Such strategic cooperation will ensure the future sustainability of Afghan National Security Forces.

Thirdly, economic transition and aid delivery will be crucial for the sustainability of the transition. That requires the commitment of the international community in supporting our self-reliance strategy through the transformation decade. The Tokyo Conference in July was about not letting the drawdown of international combat forces affect Afghanistan's strides towards stability and prosperity. It will be important to see how the realization of the mutual commitments made in Tokyo will help us to address humanitarian and development challenges, which is essential not only for stability but also for sustainability in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is committed to upholding the agreements made in Tokyo, which include commitments in the areas of equitable elections; good governance and the rule of law; human rights, including women's rights; and inclusive and sustainable development. We look forward to continuing to work with our international partners on the basis of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework.

The economic transition is also about improving aid effectiveness, ensuring alignment with national priorities, and accountability for and transparency of aid spending. Aid delivery and efficiency are particularly important at a time when not only do we face economic instability as a result of conflict, but unemployment and poverty remain significant problems. Building the capacity of Afghan institutions to address the challenges ahead will be essential. It is crucial that the international community's support be in line with national priorities and channelled through the Afghan budget, as agreed at the 2010 Kabul Conference. It is also important that aid delivery be based on emerging needs on the ground and directed to areas where need is greatest. Afghanistan is ready to be held accountable for every penny it spends. We believe that the commitments made in Tokyo will facilitate a sustainable economic future for Afghanistan.

Fourthly, relations with Afghanistan's neighbours and with countries in our greater region are critical for stability and progress. Afghanistan is developing its bilateral and multilateral relations in all areas with countries in the region. We are in the centre of the Heart of Asia Process and see that cooperation as essential for peace and stability. Our partnerships with all countries in the region can be mutually beneficial; Afghanistan can serve as an economic bridge in an increasingly globalized region that is seeking progress and prosperity. At the Heart of Asia meeting in Kabul in June 2012, participating countries agreed upon a series of confidence-building measures regarding a range of issues, a number of which were endorsed in February in Baku. We look forward to the next ministerial meeting in Almaty in April.

We are engaged with a number of countries on our path to normalization, which includes helping our reconciliation process. Most recently, we have continued trilateral discussions with Pakistan and the United Kingdom, as well as other forums, to help cooperation. We are hopeful about the outcome of our joint efforts.

Fifthly, a successful transition will require effective partnership with the United Nations. Since 2001, the United Nations has been at the centre of the coordination of international efforts in Afghanistan, and we appreciate the important role it has played. More recently, we have seen how the United Nations is adjusting its role to meet the transition needs. In that regard, the United Nations underwent a comprehensive review of its activities in Afghanistan in 2011. In his recent report, the Secretary-General emphasizes the importance of realigning the relationship between the international community and the Government of Afghanistan, and it reflects on the role of the United Nations beyond the transition.

As we complete the transition and transfer full responsibility to the Afghan Government, we can envisage the normalization of United Nations activities in the years to come. Aid coherence, One UN and greater accountability are important for Afghanistan, for the United Nations itself and for donor countries. Afghanistan looks forward to close cooperation with UNAMA in the coming year as it continues its efforts towards the priority areas of good offices in support of Afghan-led political processes, human rights, development coherence and the coordination of humanitarian assistance. In that regard, we welcome the renewal of the UNAMA mandate, which has continually evolved to reflect and reinforce the principles of Afghan ownership and leadership.

The end of the transition will signal the beginning of a new chapter — one marked by national resilience and the strategic goal of self-reliance. While the nature of the international community's engagement with Afghanistan is evolving, its continued support will be vital. The full realization of sovereignty and self-reliance will make Afghanistan a more effective partner for the world, but achieving that requires the trust, confidence and long-term commitment of the international community. Afghanistan looks forward to lasting cooperation with our international partners towards enduring peace, stability and prosperity in the country.