

Security Council Open Debate on UNAMA, March 19th 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mrs. Perceval, Permanent Mission of Argentina to the United Nations.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his statement and his recent report on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2013/133). I should also like to thank Ambassador Tanin for his important contribution. I should also like to recognize the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš at the helm of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and the leadership of Australia on this matter within the Security Council.

Today's debate is taking place at a decisive moment for Afghanistan as we look ahead to the dual transition that will take place in 2014: the political transition culminating in presidential and provincial elections in April 2014, and the security transition, which will see the conclusion of the withdrawal of International Security Assistance Force troops at the end of 2014, with the full transfer of security responsibilities to the Afghan security forces. Together, these events will signal a new phase of sovereignty and independence for Afghanistan. Attention must therefore be given not only to how to ensure the steps needed to achieve a successful transition, which is key to peace and stability in the country, but also the modalities and configuration of assistance from the international community following 2014, including the role of the United Nations and UNAMA, whose mandate the Security Council has today extended for another year.

With regard to the elections, it is of the utmost importance that all steps be taken to ensure that we reach April 2014 with an orderly electoral process. It will be essential for all Afghan institutions to agree on a legal framework that will govern this process and endow it with clear ground rules. The decision of the Afghan authorities to request assistance from UNAMA in this area is a decidedly positive development. We hope that that support continues and produces tangible results.

We also understand that the ongoing professionalization of the Afghan National Security Forces, as well as respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law, should continue to be central elements of a transition that institutionalizes the protection of civilians and ensures the leadership and civilian control of the security sector.

On that point we cannot fail to express concern over the number of civilian victims caused by the conflict, which, while less than recorded in 2012, continues to be unacceptable. The rise in the number of deliberate attacks against civilians merely because they are believed to support the Government is particularly alarming, as is the increase in the number of women and children killed or injured in that same period. All parties, in particular the anti-Government forces, responsible for most of the victims, should take the necessary measures to ensure the protection of civilians and to fulfil their obligations under international law.

For Argentina, dialogue and reconciliation are critical in Afghanistan in order to change the dynamic of the conflict and to address the security challenges. We understand that any national reconciliation process that is launched must be headed and led by the Afghans themselves. In that regard, we support the efforts of the High Peace Council. At the same time, we wish to recognize and welcome the steps taken by the Government of Pakistan so that such a process can take place. We hope that the emerging positive signs will lead to a dialogue with clear parameters and objectives.

With regard to the role of the United Nations in Afghanistan, we believe that UNAMA has a very important role in the transition phase and post-2014 in key areas, such as support for the electoral process, the promotion and protection of human rights, coordination between donors and the Government, the facilitation of the peace and reconciliation process, the coordination of humanitarian assistance, the return and rehabilitation of refugees and the capacity-building of the

Afghan authorities and institutions, in order to meet the needs of its population and to increasingly ensure the exercise of economic, social and cultural rights in the context of ongoing sustainable development. We must therefore begin a process of reflection on UNAMA's future role up to and post-2014. A robust UNAMA with a clear mandate and the necessary resources for its implementation are issues of critical importance. That will signal that the international community continues to support a democratic, prosperous, stable and sovereign Afghanistan.

For that reason, we wish to express our satisfaction with the fact that the UNAMA mandate that we have renewed today maintains its basic features, including the Mission's role with regard to elections at the request of the Afghan authorities, and the emphasis on the protection of civilians and the monitoring of violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Afghanistan, in particular with regard to women and children. In the light of the most recent report of the Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflict (S/2013/149), we also welcome the fact that resolution 2096 (2013) continues to underscore the importance of implementing resolution 1325 (2000) and the subsequent resolutions on women and peace and security.

UNAMA has also played, and should continue to play, a significant role in supporting Afghanistan's efforts to promote human rights. We encourage the Afghan authorities to continue strengthening an effective system of protection, bearing in mind in particular the recommendations made by the High Commissioner for Human Rights in her most recent report on the situation in the country.

It would not be appropriate on our part to try to offer recommendations on the way in which the Afghan people and Government should resolve their difficulties. However, in conclusion, I would like to briefly point out three important issues for Afghanistan.

First, while we encourage the Afghan reconciliation process, we also believe that justice and the fight against impunity should be at the heart of the pursuit of lasting peace. For that reason, we believe that steps should be taken to strengthen the institutional capacity in order to ensure accountability in cases of massive human rights violations, war crimes and crimes against humanity, in line with the recommendations in the annual report on the protection of civilians (S/2012/376) and in the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Secondly, according to the report of the Secretary-General, poppy cultivation has increased for the third consecutive year. That is to say that, despite the efforts of the international community, the problem of the illicit trafficking of opiates continues to be a matter of serious concern. We understand that dealing with the issue requires a comprehensive strategy that takes into account supply and demand and the adoption of prohibition and socioeconomic measures. For Afghanistan, the issue of terrorism and the fight against drug trafficking are separate matters that require different and distinct strategies, as well as the clear commitment of the Government of Afghanistan, the States of the region and the international community.

Thirdly, we are convinced that the basis for solid democracy and stable and lasting peace in Afghanistan can be established only through a focus that includes the broader dimensions of economic, cultural and social development, the promotion and protection of human rights and the strengthening of the rule of law. That is the future that we desire for the country and to which the international community is committed.