

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

Statement by Mr. Rishchynski, Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations.

I thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to address the Council.

This meeting is particularly timely, given the renewal of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) mandate today. The year ahead will be a crucial test for Afghan leaders. The future of a sustainable and functional Afghan democracy can rest only upon credible and constitutional elections. We welcomed the Independent Election Commission's announcement last fall that the next presidential elections will take place on 5 April 2014, and Canada notes that President Karzai's tenure is coming to a close at the end of his second mandate.

Canada encourages the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and the Afghan Government to press forward with the strengthening of the electoral process. We note with concern that the likelihood of irregularities and fraud remains high and must be mitigated well in advance of elections. It is essential, in our view, that the democratic opposition be able to exercise its full rights, as prescribed by the Constitution and as affirmed by Afghans themselves. To that end, we encourage the Government to ensure that the process is transparent and inclusive. We welcome the upcoming debate within the Afghan Parliament to finalize the electoral and IEC structure laws, and we remain committed to working with the Government of Afghanistan's executive and legislative branches to ensure that the voices of all Afghan citizens, including women, will be heard and honoured.

However, elections alone do not make a vibrant, inclusive and democratic society; the Government of Afghanistan must also deliver on its rule of law and human rights commitments. UNAMA's most recent report on the elimination of violence against women noted that there remained a disturbing under-reporting of incidents of violence against women, and a lack of serious investigation into credible allegations. More needs to be done to implement the important provisions of that law. More must be done to uphold the integrity of the relationship between Afghan women and their laws. The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission is essential for the defence of these rights, among others, and the Government of Afghanistan must move forward with the appointment of commissioners. We caution and stress that those appointments should be merit-based, transparent and inclusive, lest the Government be seen to actively subvert the Afghan people and their emerging democracy.

On the occasion of the Security Council meeting on Afghanistan held in September 2012 (see S/PV.6840), Canada emphasized the importance of improving Government transparency and accountability to ensure that the funds pledged by the international community at the Tokyo Conference are used effectively and appropriately. Since then, Canada has worked with the Government of Afghanistan, UNAMA and other members of the Accountability Framework technical and steering committees to ensure that Afghanistan and the international community respect their mutual agreements undertaken in Tokyo. The Accountability Framework is essential to empowering the Afghan people, promoting lasting trust among the Afghan people, and upholding the trust of donor countries throughout the transition period.

Canada also views positively the efforts of the Heart of Asia countries to move forward a regional process comprising specific and cooperative measures to overcome the current challenges with regard to security and the economy. The constructive participation of Afghanistan's neighbours in the country's long-term stability and development is absolutely essential to realizing that region's significant potential during the transformation decade.

Canada welcomes the progress made in recent months in the peace and reconciliation process. We

reiterate our insistence that women's rights not be forsaken for the sake of stability, as well as our support for an Afghan-led and -owned process. More can and should be done to ensure that the opponents of peace do not derail the reconciliation process through acts of terrorism.

All countries of the region should implement substantial and agreed commitments in order to improve security in Afghanistan. In particular, they should firmly deal with the threat posed by the extremist insurgent groups operating on both sides of the border that undermine the stability of South-East Asia. The people of Pakistan and of other countries of the region who wish to see peace with their Afghan neighbour in the context of shared prosperity in Central and South Asia should see those wishes respected.

Canada fully supports firm action against terrorists who seek to undermine peace through indiscriminate attacks on Afghan civilians. For that reason, we welcome the United Nations listing of the Haqqani Network as an entity that constitutes a threat to the stability and security of Afghanistan. We will ensure that, in Canada, the full legal weight of that listing is brought to bear on members and supporters of the Haqqani Network. We encourage all United Nations Members to do the same in their national jurisdictions.

Security will remain a key challenge for Afghanistan during the transition phase. Canada finds the obfuscations of truth or statements lacking hard facts during the security transition to be deeply troubling. It is never appropriate to politically posture over the fallen or under the tragic circumstances of innocent lives lost. As the transfer of lead security responsibility to the Afghan forces is under way, it is equally essential that the Afghan people be aware of where accountability rests. We look forward to the final stage of the transition, where Afghans will assume full security responsibility for the entire country by the end of 2014. Canada has worked closely with the Government of Afghanistan and our international partners to train and prepare the Afghan National Security Forces to take over security responsibility. We remain committed to ensuring that the people of Afghanistan can access the security and democracy that they have been promised by their leaders.