

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

Statement by Mr. Søvnal, Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nations.

I thank you, Sir, for giving me the floor. Let me, from the outset, fully align myself with the statement made by the European Union delegation on behalf of the European Union. I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his thoughtful and thorough report (S/2013/133) and for his informative briefing. Let me also welcome the 12-month extension of UNAMA's mandate.

Afghanistan has made tremendous leaps forward since 2001. The security, political and economic transition processes leading up to 2014 are all well under way, although the situation remains fragile. The Afghan national security forces are making good headway in taking the lead in security operations across the country. Preparations are under way for the presidential elections in 2014 and for the parliamentary elections the year after. And economically, Afghanistan has seen a steady growth in the past decade, even if the country is still dependent on international aid. That progress is due to the determined efforts of the Government of Afghanistan and the concerted support of the international community and the United Nations. However, there is no room for complacency. We all have to stay focused. There is a real risk that much of what has been achieved could be lost, if our efforts are not sustained.

As for Denmark, I can assure the Council that we will continue to support the Afghan people on their path towards a democratic, stable and secure Afghanistan. Recently, the Danish Government announced a two- year plan for Danish engagement in Afghanistan for the period 2013-2014. Within that framework, we have just decided to withdraw our combat troops six months earlier than previously foreseen. We remain committed to assisting the Afghan people beyond 2014 with training, advice, assistance and financial support to the Afghan National Security Forces and with development assistance. I am pleased to inform the Council that Danish development assistance will actually increase in the years from 2013 to 2017 to an average of 530 million Danish kroner per year — approximately \$100 million per year — making Afghanistan the largest recipient of Danish development assistance. We urge others to follow that example.

As reflected in the briefing and the other statements today, there is already a lot of attention focused on next year's presidential elections. It is vital that those elections be inclusive and transparent and that the result be broadly accepted by the Afghan people. This is especially important because Afghans clearly have taken to their hearts the concept of electing their future leaders. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the role of UNAMA and of the United Nations system in assisting the Afghan Government in preparing for the elections.

We see a strong need for a dynamic UNAMA in the years to come. UNAMA should continue to use its good offices and its political outreach in support of Afghan-led political processes. It should also continue to promote human rights, including the rights of women and children, and support the strengthening of the capacity of Afghan institutions.

To that end, UNAMA needs adequate resources. We are concerned about the recent cuts in UNAMA's 2013 budget and would like to stress the importance of providing the Mission with adequate resources. It is vital that we do not hamper the ability of UNAMA to fulfill its mandate at this critical time.

As recognized by the Secretary-General in his report, UNAMA and the other United Nations organizations present in Afghanistan must adjust as the security, political and economic transition in Afghanistan progresses. The role of the United Nations must, of course, reflect increased Afghan leadership and ownership. We are therefore looking forward to a thorough discussion of the future

role of the United Nations and UNAMA in Afghanistan as we approach the transformation decade.

Only by working together can the Afghan Government and its international partners realize the vision of the transformation decade for Afghanistan. The Afghan Government and people can rest assured that Denmark will not leave Afghanistan in 2014. Our cooperation will change as our military presence is drawn down, but our support of Afghanistan and of the Afghan people remains steadfast.