

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

Statement by Mr. Ušackas, Permanent Mission of European Union to the United Nations.

I should like at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you and the Russian Federation on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association country Norway, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2013/133) and presentation, as well as Ambassador Tanin for his report.

Last July in Tokyo the international conference reaffirmed the partnership between the Government of Afghanistan and the international community. The Tokyo Framework is the core structure governing mutual accountability between Afghanistan and its development partners. Its implementation remains paramount in achieving a successful transition and transformation in Afghanistan. In that regard, the EU welcomes the recently presented progress in the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board meeting, endorsing four national priority programmes. The finalized set of those programmes should allow for the more rational allocation of donors' resources in line with the country's priorities.

Afghanistan has made substantial economic progress over the past 10 years, but a number of challenges remain. As Afghanistan continues to move towards economic self-reliance, it will be vital to build confidence in the Afghan economy and attract and retain foreign and domestic investment. It is important that this confidence not be undermined. Therefore, it is vital that the International Monetary Fund programme remain on track and that the structural reforms suggested by the World Bank on private mining investment, the introduction of the planned value-added tax, deep customs reforms to reduce opportunities for corruption and leakage at borders, the improvement of land management and land acquisition, and the strengthening of internal and external controls will be put in place.

Corruption continues to be a major problem that touches the lives of many ordinary Afghans. It is vital that the Afghan Government visibly tackle this issue in order to strengthen the legitimacy of the State, improve service delivery for citizens and establish a business environment conducive to domestic and foreign investment.

Enduring peace in Afghanistan will have to rest on a political settlement comprising all national, regional and international stakeholders. We believe that reconciliation has to be a totally inclusive, Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process. Nevertheless, the European Union and its member States stand ready to support the process with the advice and assistance we have to offer, drawing from our own rich experience in conflict resolution.

The EU will continue to support the High Peace Council. We also welcome the recent developments in the infra-Afghan dialogue towards reconciliation, including efforts to open an office in Doha, as well as the positive steps towards an improvement in relations with Pakistan and Afghanistan. Several EU member States have also facilitated important events, including the Chantilly talks in France and the United Kingdom's trilaterals between the United Kingdom, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

With regard to the human rights situation, the European Union thanks the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for publishing the report on the treatment of conflict-related detainees in Afghan custody in January 2013, and we welcome the constructive response of the Government of Afghanistan to that report. We thank UNAMA for publishing its annual report on protection of civilians in armed conflict, and we support its recommendations. We also thank UNAMA for the report on the implementation of the law on elimination of violence against women in Afghanistan, and encourage the Afghan Government to continue to work towards better implementation of this law. In this vein, we also wish to reiterate the importance of the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and all subsequent resolutions on women and peace and security.

We encourage the Government of Afghanistan to appoint new, qualified human rights commissioners as soon as possible. The delay in their appointment continues to constrain the functioning of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. The EU will continue its support for civilian policing, which is essential to strengthening the rule of law and contributes to the promotion of human rights. Assistance to the Afghan National Police while it is refocusing on these tasks is of significant importance.

With regard to the elections, the European Union welcomes and is committed to continuing to support the efforts of the Special Representative in implementing his mandate with regard to the holding of presidential elections in April 2014 and parliamentary elections in 2015 — elections that should be Afghan-owned and Afghan-driven, inclusive, transparent and with a legitimate outcome broadly accepted by the Afghans.

We emphasize the importance of adopting a sound legal electoral framework, including the establishment of a credible complaints mechanism. We encourage the Government of Afghanistan to appoint the chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission and its commissioners through a consultative process so that they may be accepted by the Afghans as impartial and competent. We stress the importance of the Commission putting in place a robust mechanism for fraud prevention. Election preparations should be transparent and inclusive, and they should involve all relevant stakeholders, including the Independent Electoral Commission, the Parliament, the Government, the opposition, political parties and civil society.

Counter-narcotics is a cross-cutting issue and should be tackled in a holistic way. The EU is contributing to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime programme in Afghanistan, as well as complementary regional elements on enhancing border management. Moreover, the European Union is promoting the development of a national policy for agriculture, encouraging alternative livelihoods to poppy production. The EU is also supporting the Heart of Asia process and the creation of a new regional paradigm that would help to reconcile respective security interests and gradually build new patterns of mutual interdependence, interconnectivity, trust and confidence.

The EU reiterates its full support for UNAMA's essential role during the transition and beyond. UNAMA will have a vital role to play in enabling Afghanistan and the international community to work effectively together to fulfill the commitments made in Tokyo and in monitoring the human rights and humanitarian situation. UNAMA must be properly mandated, adequately present in the country and sufficiently resourced to fulfill that role, in particular during the transition year 2014. To this end, we support the proposed extension of a strong UNAMA mandate.

As the Special Representative for the European Union in Afghanistan for the past three years, I have witnessed the progress that we have collectively achieved in support of Afghanistan. We must all draw lessons from the past. We have to demonstrate the staying power of continued support for Afghanistan through the transformation decade.

Respecting the Bonn and Tokyo commitments is important not only for Afghan citizens, but as a sign of progress to taxpayers in the donor countries. The exceptional support pledged in Chicago and Tokyo will be continued only if the presidential elections in 2014 are conducted in a credible, inclusive and transparent manner and produce a legitimate outcome; if genuine steps are undertaken to deal with corruption, justice and human rights, especially those of women; and if an environment conducive to economic development and revenue generation is created. We count on Afghanistan to show real commitment to achieving our agreed objectives, and we will need Afghanistan's neighbours to take the lead on regional cooperation, together with and in support of the Government of Afghanistan.

In conclusion, I can assure the Council once again that the European Union is committed to Afghanistan for the long term. In that regard, we look forward to the swift conclusion of our cooperation agreement on partnership and development as soon as possible.