

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

Statement by Mr. Rosenthal, Permanent Mission of Guatemala to the United Nations.

I wish to thank the Russian Federation for convening this debate. Allow me also to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the presentation of his report (S/2013/133) and for joining us today. I also thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin for his important statement, and I welcome the presence here today of Minister Bob Carr of Australia.

Our debate today offers us an opportunity to carry out a timely, in-depth assessment in preparation for post-2014 Afghanistan. We have commenced another critical and historic year for Afghanistan and for the United Nations. As we enter this new phase, we believe that peace and stability will depend upon the ability of the Afghan people themselves to ensure not only peace and security, but also democratic governance, national reconciliation, the rule of law and the protection of human rights during the political and military transition of 2014. In that context I would like to make the four observations.

First, we consider it is a requirement for peace and stability, as well as for the normalization of the Afghan political arena, that credible, inclusive and transparent presidential elections be held in 2014, in strict accordance with the provisions of the Afghan Constitution. We therefore believe that all of us should follow closely the progress in electoral reform and the results of the work of the Independent Election Commission, as well as the future designation of its head. Both the Commission as well as the Electoral Complaints Commission should take advantage of the ongoing deliberations with the United Nations to continue strengthening their capacities.

Secondly, we consider that another important step in the political process is the necessary continuation of the Afghan-owned and Afghan-led national reconciliation. We support the efforts of Mr. Salahuddin Rabbani and the High Peace Council of Afghanistan to pursue the path of negotiation for a sustainable and lasting peace. At the same time, it is important to continue sending a clear message to political dissidents to the effect that reconciliation dialogue will be held only with those who renounce violence, have no links with terrorist organizations and respect the Constitution, including its provisions on human rights. We welcome the constructive engagement with Pakistan, including that conducted in a trilateral format under the auspices of the United Kingdom, given the fact that Pakistan is an important partner for Afghanistan and the region.

Thirdly, we commend the steady progress we have seen in the transfer of responsibility for security matters, already in its fourth stage, with 87 per cent of the population now under Afghan security. We understand that, under the transition, the role of the International Security Assistance Force will evolve from the area of combat to that of training, advising and support. In the post-2014 period, the Afghan security forces will have to demonstrate the degree to which they are ready to take on alone the fight against such global problems as terrorism, transnational organized crime and its links to illegal drug trafficking.

Fourthly, despite gradual progress in some areas, the human rights situation continues to be a concern for numerous reasons. We note that while the number of civilian casualties and injuries fell by 4 per cent over the past year, attacks on women and girls were up by 20 per cent, coupled with the deplorable situation that women and girls continue to face in Afghanistan. We trust that the Afghan Government will take concrete measures to protect and guarantee their rights, and we fully support all United Nations efforts in that area. We commend the thematic reports from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) on violence against women, the situation of detainees and the issue of the protection of civilians. They have had an impact on the Government, which is already taking steps to respond to the findings and recommendations of the report on the situation

of detainees.

Turning now to the development of regional cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours, we support the Istanbul Process. We are encouraged by the recent meeting in Baku, which endorsed implementation plans for confidence-building measures. We also commend the shared vision of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran aimed at finding strategic solutions for Afghan refugees.

Concerning UNAMA's mandate, Guatemala supports its renewal for 12 months. For the transition to be truly effective and irreversible, Afghanistan's institutions must be strong and capable. We believe that the United Nations in general, and UNAMA in particular, have an important role to play in the civilian aspects of the transition. There is reason to maintain a strong, decentralized presence throughout the country beyond 2014. We agree with the priorities identified in paragraph 66 of the Secretary-General's report. At the same time, we are responsible for ensuring that UNAMA has the resources necessary for providing the required support.

In conclusion, we believe that the United Nations has the multilateral experience, the capacity for coordination and the impartiality needed to meet the challenges and requirements of the transformation decade beyond 2014. We encourage everyone to pursue their Tokyo commitments and not to abandon the goals of the existing partnership between the international community and Afghanistan. We cannot lose sight of the broader picture when we know how much there is still to do. In the Security Council, Guatemala will act not only on the basis of its support for Afghanistan's leadership and ownership of the transition process, but also on the Council's primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security.