

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

Statement by Ms. Lucas, Permanent Mission of Luxembourg to the United Nations.

Let me begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his report (S/2013/133) and for his comprehensive presentation to the Council this morning. I also wish to thank his Special Representative, Mr. Jan Kubiš, for his work as Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We welcome the commitment and dedication of UNAMA's staff, who, in demanding conditions, perform crucial work competently. Lastly, I would like to thank Ambassador Tanin for his very illuminating presentation on the priorities of his country.

Luxembourg associates itself with the statement to be made on behalf of the European Union by its Special Representative for Afghanistan.

I shall address three points, namely, the commitment of the international community, the key role of the Afghan authorities and, finally, the protection of human rights in Afghanistan.

In renewing UNAMA's mandate today, we rightly acknowledge the long-term support of the international community for Afghanistan. The planned withdrawal of international troops by the end of 2014 should not lead to a withdrawal of the international community. Instead, we must move towards a renewal of our commitment to help Afghanistan achieve its transformation into a stable and democratic society. The international community must stand with Afghanistan during that critical period. Luxembourg has chosen to do just that by adopting a holistic approach that combines the tools of diplomacy, development and defence.

In the area of development cooperation, we particularly support the work of the World Food Programme in Afghanistan. Based on a multi-year commitment, we also contribute to the Afghanistan reconstruction funds administered by the World Bank. We also contribute in the European context. The European Union and its member States annually grant Afghanistan more than €1 billion in development aid.

Luxembourg has participated in the International Security Assistance Force since 2003. We committed ourselves at the NATO Chicago Summit to continue our substantial contribution to the financing of the Afghan National Security Forces, with an annual contribution of up to \$5 million. Lastly, through the European Union, my country also participates in the training of the Afghan police.

The substantial assistance from the international community will bear fruit only if there is a shared commitment to implement the commitments made at the successive international conferences of recent years. In parallel, Afghanistan must continue its efforts in the areas of the rule of law, democratic elections, the fight against corruption, combating drug trafficking, and respect for human rights.

That brings me to the second point. Whatever may be the extent of the support of the international community, the genuine key to success is ultimately in the hands of the Afghans themselves. Their political will will be crucial. That is why we fully support the goal of transition so as to enable the Afghan people to take charge of their own destiny gradually by assuming responsibility for security and reconstruction. Pride of place in that ownership effort must go to the electoral process and the process of reconciliation, both led by Afghans.

With regard to the preparations for the elections, we join the Secretary-General's call in his report urging the parties concerned to adopt a constructive attitude in order to avoid a deadlock, whose

consequences would be severe. More generally, as noted by several speakers this morning, it is important to ensure broad participation and to put in place a credible and transparent electoral mechanism, so as to ensure that the outcome of the elections is widely acknowledged and accepted by the population. In that regard, it is essential that women can safely participate as voters and candidates alike in the upcoming elections.

In terms of national reconciliation, we support the initiatives of the High Peace Council, and we welcome the regional dimension that efforts at reconciliation have taken on in recent months.

Human rights is the third, and final, point I would like to address. Let us not forget that Afghanistan is first and foremost a country of more than 30 million people who yearn for a normal life for themselves and their families, including respect of their fundamental rights. In that context, we welcome the important place that is made in the mandate of UNAMA for human rights in general, and for the rights of women and children in particular.

With regard to the rights of children, we are very concerned about the continued recruitment and use of children by the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other extremist groups, inter alia, to commit suicide attacks. We are also concerned by the violations and other serious abuses against children, in particular the continuation of attacks against schools.

In contrast, we would like to acknowledge the efforts of the Afghan Government in the implementation of the action plan against the recruitment and use of children in the Afghan National Security Forces, signed on 30 January 2011. It is important that UNAMA continue to effectively support the Afghan authorities in the implementation of that plan, and that it devote the capabilities and expertise required by the Council to that end. Along the same lines, we welcome the appeal to the Secretary-General that he continue to give special treatment to the matter of children in armed conflict in his reports to the Council, in line with the pertinent resolutions. Indeed, that is an essential element in the Council's ability to support and follow up the activities in the area of protecting children.

In conclusion, Luxembourg would like to reiterate its full support for the mandate of UNAMA, which we have just renewed today. It is an ambitious mandate, one that will serve the Afghan people and testify to the will of the international community to stand beside the Afghan people.