

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

Statement by Mr. Bouchaara, Permanent Mission of Morocco to the United Nations.

Allow me to begin by thanking the Russian presidency of the Security Council for having organized this debate. I should also like to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative for Afghanistan, Mr. Ján Kubiš, for their detailed quarterly briefings. I also welcome Ambassador Tanin and thank him for his statement. Finally, I also wish to thank Australia, represented today by its Minister for Foreign Affairs, for its leadership within the Security Council on this matter.

The report before us today (S/2013/133) comes at a critical moment in the history of Afghanistan, one year before the presidential and provincial elections set for April 2014 and only a few months before the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force from Afghanistan. During the reporting period, the security situation in Afghanistan improved significantly. For the first time in six years, there has been a fall in the number of civilian casualties, at a time when the Afghan security forces have begun the fourth phase of the transition, taking control of territory that is home to the majority of the country's population.

The falling number of casualties can be attributed in part to the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme, which continues its roll-out, and to the significant role of the High Peace Council. By late December 2012, more than 6,000 combatants had joined the programme with the aim of laying down their arms and joining the Afghan National Army. In that context, the High Peace Council continues to strive to establish conditions conducive to reconciliation by launching direct dialogue with representatives of civil society, women's groups, religious leaders and political figures.

The year 2014 will be a watershed year for Afghanistan. Two major electoral dates have been set that are of particular importance because they will open a new chapter of Afghan history. In that regard, we must ensure that the elections are organized successfully by insisting that they be inclusive, reliable and transparent. In that context, we welcome the efforts of the Independent Election Commission to prepare

the elections. In that vein, the participation of political parties and civil society in the electoral process will have a positive impact on the coming elections, endowing them with greater legitimacy and credibility in the eyes of Afghan citizens.

Afghanistan has made great strides, although many challenges remain. Cooperation between Afghanistan and neighbouring countries will be critical in particular to resolving such issues as the fight against drug trafficking, counter-terrorism, trade, education, natural disaster management, and investment. Morocco commends the many initiatives launched in that respect, including the high-level meeting on the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan, held in Baku.

Cooperation between Afghanistan and the international community is equally important, inter alia, to fulfilling the commitments undertaken in the framework of the Tokyo Conference. The commitment of international donors and financial institutions to rebuilding Afghanistan is necessary if the country is to implement its national priorities.

In conclusion, my country believes it important for the process to continue the process that has been under way for several years to stabilize Afghanistan, which is emerging from a lengthy conflict, and to help it to stand on a more solid footing and to rebuild. That will require the international community's support, but it must be Afghan-led and for the benefit the Afghan people. We commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Assistance

Mission in Afghanistan for their outstanding work in Afghanistan.