

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

Statement by Mr. Gasana, Permanent Mission of Rwanda to the United Nations.

I thank you, Sir, for having organized this important debate on Afghanistan. I wish also to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing on the current situation in Afghanistan. Let me also thank our good colleague Ambassador Tanin for his encouraging statement.

Rwanda is encouraged, of course, by the positive developments in Afghanistan, highlighted by the Secretary-General, despite the challenges that the Afghan Government is still facing. We appreciate the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in assisting the people and Government of Afghanistan, and we are convinced that resolution 2096 (2013), which was just adopted, will somehow enable the Mission to better implement its mandate, with a focus on the key priorities in Afghanistan.

Resolution 2096 (2013) reaffirms the strong commitment of the Council to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan. We therefore express our appreciation to the International Security Assistance Force for the work it has done in fighting against anti-Government forces and in enhancing the capacity of the Afghan security forces. We welcome the decision to draw down the international forces comes 2014, which will open a new era in the history of Afghanistan.

We take note of the decrease in the number of incidents and civilian casualties for the first time in six years, but we remain concerned about the terrorist activities that are still being carried out in Afghanistan and that undermine the authority of the political and security institutions of that country. We particularly condemn the use of human shields and children as suicide bombers, and we call upon the Afghan authorities, with the support of the international community, to combat such terrorist activities.

Besides security, Rwanda also believes that reconciliation and national unity, through an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process, are of paramount importance. We commend the efforts of the High Peace Council to foster reconciliation in Afghanistan, and we express our appreciation to UNAMA for supporting that process. We believe that only a highly inclusive dialogue can bring about lasting peace in Afghanistan. We welcome the decision taken by some members of the Taliban to renounce violence and terrorism and to engage in a political and reconciliation process with Kabul.

As we all know, reconciliation cannot be considered in isolation from regional dynamics. We are encouraged by the progress towards greater regional cooperation that has been made in recent months. We support the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan. In particular, we commend neighbouring Pakistan on its support for peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan, which it has again demonstrated by releasing 26 Afghan Taliban in February.

Rwanda welcomes the holding of presidential and provincial council elections in April 2013. The elections will be a cornerstone of the ongoing democratic process in Afghanistan as the drawdown of international forces is under way. We commend the Afghan Government for what it has already achieved in preparing for the elections. We request UNAMA and the United Nations Development Programme to continue their support in enhancing Afghanistan's electoral capacity.

However, we remain concerned about the human rights situation in Afghanistan, in particular the violence against women. In that regard, however, we need to view the situation from a historical perspective and to remember what was the condition of women during the Taliban regime. We are

encouraged by the resolve of the Afghan Government in implementing the Law on Elimination of Violence against Women in Afghanistan. We call upon the international community to continue its support in that regard.

Needless to say, the war in Afghanistan, following a long period of Taliban obscurantism, had negative effects on the economic and humanitarian situation in the country. We deplore the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, where more than 3 million refugees have been registered in neighbouring Iran and Pakistan, not to mention the growing number of internally displaced persons, whose situation is aggravated by natural disasters and poverty. We welcome the July 2012 Tokyo Conference, where donors pledged \$16 billion in development assistance. We urge all international partners to materialize their support and pledges to Afghanistan, including through the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework.

Let me conclude by commending President Hamid Karzai and his Government for the tremendous achievements since 2001. We also commend the International Security Assistance Force and UNAMA troop-contributing countries for their sacrifice in the cause of peace, security and stability in Afghanistan. I would also like to welcome His Excellency Mr. Bob Carr, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia. I would like to commend him and our colleague Ambassador Quinlan for the work well done.