

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

Statement by Mr. Menan, Permanent Mission of Togo to the United Nations.

I would, first of all, like to thank the Secretary-General for presenting his report on the situation in Afghanistan and the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (S/2013/133). Togo reiterates its congratulations to the Secretary-General and to the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We also thank the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan for his statement. Lastly, I welcome the ministers who have come to New York in order to take part in this debate convened by the Russian presidency of the Council.

The situation in Afghanistan remains at the heart of the concerns of the international community, which has spared no effort to promote sustainable peace and development in that country. As a result, the implementation of the Kabul process regarding good governance has made progress. International partners have supported the Afghan Government in the implementation and follow-up to the commitments made at the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan on 8 July 2012. Along those same lines, discussions on defining the objectives with regard to the core elements of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, which must be achieved before the meeting of senior officials in July, have continued. We hope that those objectives can be achieved within the set time frame. In the context of our debate, my delegation will take up five points, namely, on the political process, the issue of security, the human rights situation, humanitarian aid and the drug scourge.

With regard to the political process, the Secretary-General's report notes the efforts for reconciliation and the preparations for the elections in 2014. We hope that the ulema peace conference, to take place under the auspices of the High Peace Council, the outreach activities and the inter-Afghan dialogue, promoted by UNAMA and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), will help to strengthen the basis of a true reconciliation in the country.

At the same time, we note the readiness stated by the President of the country to renew contact with the Taliban who wish to hold talks with the High Council. To that end, the commitment of the Afghan, Pakistan, British and French Governments to help bring together the various sensitivities of Afghan society in the context of an inclusive dialogue should be welcomed.

The convening and holding of presidential and provincial elections in a year's time remain crucial elements in the political process under way in Afghanistan. In December 2012, the Secretary-General's report (S/2012/907) noted a lack of compromise between the two houses of the National Assembly with respect to the appointment of a new President and members of the Independent Election Commission. Although the stalemate persists to this day, we nevertheless note some positive signs, such as the decision to begin the distribution of electronic national identity cards, beginning on 21 March 2013, and the active and continuous participation of political parties and civil society in electoral activities.

Moreover, we welcome the ongoing support of UNDP through the ELECT II electoral support project aimed at strengthening the legal and electoral capabilities of Afghan institutions. We also welcome the information exchange sessions aimed at harmonizing the efforts of international stakeholders in the electoral process. We also hope that the recommendations made by the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs following the recent assessment missions will enable the parameters for electoral assistance on the part of the United Nations to be defined. We call on the Afghan Government to preserve the independence of electoral institutions, so as to prevent a crisis that could undermine the political process.

Security in Afghanistan continues to be a matter of great concern, at a time when a progressive

handover of security responsibilities is taking place from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to Afghan security institutions, which will henceforth be responsible for the security of almost all of the country. Indeed, many incidents, in particular the attack against the Jalalabad airfield in December 2012, the attack against the National Directorate of Security and its Director General, violence committed against civilians and attacks on humanitarian personnel, are all sources of concern. Togo nevertheless hopes that the capacity- building programmes for the Afghan National Police and National Army and the project to transform the National Police, which is currently a security force, into a law enforcement and neighbourhood police force will help to bring the security situation under control.

We are equally concerned about the human rights situation, in particular as it pertains to violence against women. We note, by way of example, the assassination in December 2012 of the Acting Director of the Department of Women Affairs in Laghman Province, which was the second assassination of the incumbent there in less than five months. We also note a 20 per cent increase in the number of women and girls killed or wounded over the past year. Nevertheless, we welcome the work of the United Nations Population Fund, UN-Women and the World Health Organization. Thanks to their support, an intake system has been established for treating victims of sexual violence and providing care for them.

With respect to the rights of children, we are grateful to the United Nations for having created the action plan for the prevention of underage recruitment and its annexes on the killing and maiming of children and on sexual violence against children. We welcome the strong support from the Afghan Minister for Foreign Affairs and his commitment to convene the Interministerial Steering Committee and Technical Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We also welcome the decree by President Karzai on 16 February 2013 on the implementation of recommendations pursuant to the UNAMA findings regarding torture committed by many State institutions.

In the current difficult circumstances, the humanitarian situation remains fragile, in spite of efforts to stabilize it. Togo is pleased with the initiatives undertaken to deal with those difficulties, in particular the meeting of 23 January 2012 between

Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the implementation of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries. Appropriate solutions must also be found to the issue of internally displaced persons, as the number of such individuals continues to grow.

The issue of narcotics in Afghanistan is a recurring one. According to the preliminary results of the Opium Risk Assessment 2013 for many areas of the country by the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, poppy cultivation has increased for the third consecutive year. Given the alleged presence of jihadist and mujahideen elements from Afghanistan and the region among terrorist and drug-funded jihadist armed groups in the north of Mali, we believe the Secretary-General should determine whether illicit drugs produced in Afghanistan or transiting through it are having any impact on the region of the Sahel and West Africa.

In conclusion, we would like to express our great gratitude to the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan, UNAMA and the United Nations funds and programmes for their unrelenting efforts, in a most difficult context, to ensure a more promising future for Afghanistan, given the withdrawal of ISAF in December 2014. Clearly, with the announced withdrawal of the international forces coming up next year, many challenges remain in spite of the progress made and the desire of the Afghan authorities to work to reinstate full international sovereignty for their country. Here, Togo welcomes the efforts undertaken by the Afghan authorities to integrate Afghanistan into the system

of globalization through strategic agreements with neighbouring countries and beyond. The support of the international community must thus be untiring. UNAMA's presence is also crucial, and no effort should be spared to ensure that it is able to continue its work.