

Security Council Open Debate on Afghanistan and UNAMA
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Statement by H.E. Mr. Viinanen, Representative of Finland

Finland aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union. Afghanistan is going through three challenging and intertwined processes: a security transition, political reconciliation and the reintegration of ex-combatants. It is crucial that improvements in human rights and gender equality, which are guaranteed in the Afghan Constitution, not be compromised in the reconciliation process. Finland believes that women's meaningful participation is a key component of a successful transition. The full and equal participation of women at all levels of society is a prerequisite for democracy and human rights. Women are also the keystone of sustainable development, economic success and social stability.

Afghanistan has made remarkable gains since the overthrow of the Taliban, such as improved access for girls to basic education. However, women remain on the margins of political decision-making and progress on women's rights has not been sufficient. Today, Afghan women still face insecurity in public spaces and at home, including inadequate protection against gender-based and sexual violence, as well as lack of access to an unbiased justice system and legal representation.

Since November 2010, Afghanistan and Finland have been cooperating in the field of women, peace and security through the establishment of a twinning programme. We are guided by strong Afghan ownership and leadership. Our aim is inclusive and transparent coordination among the relevant ministries and an Afghan national action plan on women, peace and security. An Afghan 1325 National Steering Committee has been established and meets regularly. In January, the Committee visited Finland. That provided new ideas on how to ensure better implementation of Security Council resolutions and mandates.

Finland will increase its annual development funding for Afghanistan by 50 per cent — from €21 million this year to €30 million by 2014. Afghanistan will remain a most important development cooperation partner for Finland. In our cooperation, we focus on three main sectors: first, good governance, democracy and the rule of law; secondly, human rights and gender, with a special focus on the education of girls; and thirdly, the Afghan economy and its growth, in particular in the mining sector.

We all must work harder to build up better governance, better respect for human rights and a viable economy in Afghanistan. People must see positive changes in their daily lives and be able to trust the authorities. The voices of civil society need to be heard and the rights and security of human rights defenders and journalists ensured.

The international community needs to do its part and give full support to the Afghan Government beyond the transition period. Finland remains committed to do that.