

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

Statement by Mr. Ragolini, Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations.

Italy endorses the statement made by the observer of the European Union and would like to add a few remarks in its national capacity.

We welcome the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and we fully support the Mission's fundamental role in contributing to the stabilization and development of Afghanistan. We praise the generous efforts of the women and men of UNAMA, who work to assist the Afghan people, often in trying circumstances, under the commendable leadership of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative for Afghanistan. UNAMA is a fundamental pillar of the international civilian presence in the country and contributes substantially to helping Afghanistan to achieve meaningful results in fields such as economic and social development, enhancing respect for human rights and strengthening institutions.

Afghanistan is entering a period of critical importance to its long-term stabilization. The last two phases of the transition are starting and should be completed in less than two years. Presidential and political elections are approaching, and the recent developments are fuelling optimism for the reconciliation process. All those processes focus on a single purpose: the gradual assumption of full responsibility by the Afghan people and Government for their country.

The international community has given assurances that it will stand by Afghanistan through the transition process and beyond, in the transformation decade.

The Conference held in Tokyo last July defined the framework of mutual commitments that should shape the long-term relationship between Afghanistan and its partners. Now is the time to make the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework operational and to take full advantage of its potential as a driving force for the sustainable development of Afghanistan. For donor countries such as Italy to fully honour their pledges, it is particularly important that Afghanistan make further tangible progress in areas such as democratic reforms, electoral processes, good governance, anti-corruption measures and the protection and promotion of human rights. In particular, the Italian Government, in accordance with our public opinion, will continue to monitor the situation of women, which we consider to be of paramount importance.

The upcoming presidential elections are a major opportunity for the Afghan authorities to translate their commitments into concrete achievements. In order for Afghanistan to pursue stability and infuse new optimism into the prospects for the post-2014 scenario, there must be a credible, transparent and inclusive electoral process. We encourage the Afghan Government, in partnership with the international community and UNAMA, to lay a solid foundation for elections and to spare no effort to achieve the broadest possible consensus on the rules of the game by reaching out to opposition groups, civil society and all the relevant stakeholders. That is the only way to foster voter participation, make the process more inclusive and ensure the legitimacy of its outcome.

The elections are closely connected to the political process to promote national reconciliation under Afghan leadership and ownership. We welcome the recent encouraging developments, including the more constructive attitude in the relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Successful national reconciliation, based on the shared principles of the Afghan Government and the international community, could be a milestone towards ensuring peace and prosperity as long as it is not accompanied by reversals in civil liberties, human rights and the democratic achievements. To avoid such a development, due consideration must be given to the concerns of women and civil society.

The destiny of Afghanistan is in the hands of its people and its institutions. However, strengthened regional cooperation is crucial to fostering economic development and to tackling common threats. Many initiatives are under way, but there is still room for greater engagement. We appreciate the dynamism of the Istanbul Process and encourage the participating countries to remain fully committed to it. Italy is ready to contribute to a genuine regional ownership of the process by participating actively in confidence-building measures on counter-narcotics and regional infrastructure.

Progress in the transition process and the gradual downsizing of the international military coalition will test the governance and development capacity of Afghanistan at the national and subnational levels. At this delicate juncture, we are convinced that UNAMA has a crucial role to play by leading and coordinating the international community's civilian efforts. That will contribute to the smooth completion of the transition and, looking beyond 2014, to the strengthening of Afghan institutions and the economy. We therefore reiterate Italy's support for the extension of UNAMA's mandate, with the recommendation that the Mission be provided with the resources needed to fulfill it.