

Security Council Open Debate on Afghanistan and UNAMA
20 March 2012, Security Council Chamber

Statement by H.E. Mr Cabral, Representative of Portugal

At the outset, I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš for his briefing. I also welcome to the Security Council Ambassador Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, and I thank him for his statement. Portugal also aligns itself with the statement to be delivered in the name of the European Union.

Next Thursday, the Security Council will be called upon to adopt a draft resolution renewing the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Portugal agrees with the basic proposals contained in that mandate. In it, the Security Council builds upon the enhanced role of the Afghan Government and, overall, of the national institutions in the process of transition and increased Afghan leadership and ownership. Such emphasis is a recognition of the fact that Afghan institutions are on the way to an increased capacity to undertake their constitutional mandate for the Afghan people in all aspects of the country's activity. At the same time, the proposed renewed mandate aims at striking a balance between the growing fulfilment of that objective and the need for an active, strong and secure presence of the United Nations throughout Afghanistan. UNAMA's leadership and coordination role is thus strengthened by such a balance, and by the clear priorities and objectives laid out in the draft resolution.

A significant part of the transition to full Afghan leadership and ownership is clearly the consolidation of the rule of law and human rights sector in the country. That is an area where the action of the State is perhaps more visible to foreign partners and more keenly felt by the population. In that regard, the action undertaken to address serious problems in the correctional system is encouraging despite the serious challenges that still exist. It is important that UNAMA and humanitarian actors are able to work on those issues with relevant Government interlocutors.

On the same note, we are encouraged by the care put into the mandate of UNAMA regarding human rights, notably the human rights of women and girls. The Mission's capacity in this area will continue to rank high in its priorities and in ours. The Mission will continue to support the efforts undertaken by the Afghan authorities, such as the full implementation of the law on the elimination of violence against women. The Mission will also continue to assess the situation of civilians, notably children, and the participation of women in political life and processes in Afghanistan, and to play a relevant role in humanitarian action. The relevance of this task, particularly during the coming months, cannot be overstated.

Secondly, in discharging their mission, international forces and international assistance face a deteriorating environment in Afghanistan. The current situation is the product of deeply regrettable actions, some of them mutually avoidable, some unpredictable. These events have had a strong impact on the population, as indeed they had on all of us friends and partners of Afghanistan. Apologies have been made and responsibilities accepted. It is now fundamental that the achievements already attained by international assistance in Afghanistan, both civil and military, are not endangered by these events. This is an undertaking for all stakeholders in Afghanistan, including the national authorities.

In these circumstances, it is clear that the coming summits and conferences will have increased importance, namely, the NATO summit in Chicago, in May, the conference on refugees in May in Switzerland, the follow-up ministerial meeting of the Istanbul conference in June and the Tokyo summit next July. The rapid sequence of these major events is a good measure of the commitment of

the international community to Afghanistan and the Afghan people, and of its interest in seizing the opportunity to consolidate the foundations of security, social and economic development and the regional integration of Afghanistan.

Portugal, as a partner of Afghanistan, is working towards, and looking forward to, outcomes from those meetings that may prove successful for the people of Afghanistan. Broad national consensus in Afghanistan regarding governance, development and the rule of law, as well as on development strategies and initiatives, is vital for a sustainable transition and, ultimately, for the success of the peace and reconciliation process.

Recent developments in the relations between State institutions, such as the National Assembly and the Government, are signs to be welcomed. UNAMA's role in the national political sphere, namely, by working for the strengthening of national electoral institutions at the request of Afghan authorities, deserves the Security Council's full support.

I conclude by reiterating my country's support for the mandate that we are preparing to approve. It is an ambitious mandate for UNAMA, and rightly so, given the priorities identified by the Afghan national authorities and the United Nations. International assistance to Afghanistan must adapt as new necessities arise and the situation on the ground changes. I wish the best to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Kubiš in the implementation of the mandate, and I assure him that we in the Security Council will continue to be ready to support the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan as required.