

**RECENT TRAGIC INCIDENTS IN AFGHANISTAN MUST NOT DERAIL PROGRESS, OR DELAY
TRANSITION
TO AFGHAN LEADERSHIP OF SECURITY, GOVERNANCE, SECURITY COUNCIL TOLD**

**Top UN Official Says Enhancing Afghan Sovereignty, Building Self-Reliance Key;
Afghanistan : Transition Will Empower Country to 'Take Charge of Its Own Destiny'**

Recent tragic incidents in Afghanistan must not derail progress or put off deadlines for the transition to Afghan leadership of the security, governance and development of the country, the Secretary-General's Special Representative told the Security Council this morning.

"The transition so far has been on target and the Afghan National Security Forces have proven that they are up to the tasks", Jan Kubiš, who is also the Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), said ahead of a discussion that included Council members and other interested parties. "Enhancing Afghan sovereignty and building self-reliance must be at the very core of the way we work," he added.

Introducing the Secretary-General's latest report ahead of the expiration of UNAMA's mandate on 23 March (see Background), Mr. Kubiš said that, in wide consultations since his arrival as Special Representative, Afghan stakeholders recognized international contributions over the past 10 years since the overthrow of the Taliban, but stressed that the pressures of the long conflict had often pushed both Afghans and international military forces to the limit. A return to stability was critical through the transition to Afghan leadership and intensified reconciliation efforts. "The message of the people is clear — it is time to wind down this war," he said.

In that light, he said that international assistance to increase Afghan capacity in all areas should be firmed up in upcoming meetings in Chicago, regarding security, and Tokyo, on non-military areas, he said. He stressed that beside security, transition also encompassed leadership and accountability in other areas to make the process sustainable. Predictable funding for the National Priority Programmes was particularly important. There was also a need to take further steps in electoral reform. UNAMA's human rights work was also seen as critical in his consultations, as 2011 was the fifth year in a row that civilian deaths rose and work for women's protection and equality remained unfinished.

Offering condolences to the families of all casualties of recent incidences of violence, he praised those who urged a non-violent reaction to the accidental Koran burning and condemned incitement, which he said "only brought death and destruction", first to Afghans while also targeting international personnel there to help, including those at the UNAMA office in Kunduz, causing the temporary relocation of international staff. Appeals for their return had already been heard from local leaders, but he emphasized that the security of staff was of critical importance.

Taking the floor next, the representative of Afghanistan agreed that the transition process was continuing apace. "A paradigm shift is under way; the aim is sovereignty — empowering

Afghanistan to take charge of its own destiny and turning the direct military and civilian function of the international community into a supporting role,” he declared, adding that a successful transition required renewed parameters of partnership between Afghanistan and the international community, with the guaranteed commitment of the continuation of military, political and financial support during the transition and the “decade of transformation” from 2015-2024. “This is what we, Afghanistan and the international community, set out to do last December in Bonn. This commitment will be supported concretely in Tokyo,” he said.

He stressed that an effective transition was partly contingent upon the successful outcome of an Afghan-led reconciliation, outreach and reintegration process. The dynamics of peace talks had shifted with the announcement of the opening of the Taliban office in Qatar. Nearly 3,500 anti-Government elements were now enrolled in the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme, and in the coming months, the Government expected to see many more joining the programme and returning to normal life.

He said that it was imperative to bring to an end such incidents as the brutal killing of civilians, mostly women and children, in Kandahar and the burning of the Koran north of Kabul and that the perpetrators be held accountable. Those incidents “undermine our trust and cooperation by inciting deep sorrow, anger and frustration.” He said the Government fully agreed with the Secretary-General’s report, particularly its findings that UNAMA should use its good offices to continue support for the Afghan-led political process, capacity-building for Afghan institutions and promotion of the human rights of all the people of the country.

Following those statements, Council members and other speakers welcomed the progress in the transition to Afghan leadership as described by Mr. Kubiš and affirmed the importance of the upcoming meetings in Chicago and Tokyo in strengthening the mutual commitments of Afghanistan and the international community to complete the process and to set the framework for aid following the transition period.

Most speakers supported keeping to the deadlines set for the security transition, although some underlined that it should not be unduly rushed. The Russian Federation representative said that, given continuing violence, it was important not to establish artificial deadlines for the withdrawal of security support; ISAF troops must fully carry out their mandate to put an end to threats in Afghanistan. Similarly, India’s representative encouraged stakeholders to find ways to ensure that Afghanistan did not feel abandoned — at least in terms of the quality, if not quantity, of international assistance post-2014. “With the gradual drawing down of international forces from their combat role, there are already signs of a transition recession,” he said.

Affirming her country’s commitment to continuing its partnership with Afghanistan through 2014 and beyond, the representative of the United States also conveyed regrets over the killing of civilians outside Kandahar, pledging that the facts would be established and accountability would be ensured. “This incident was tragic and shocking,” she said.

Also speaking this morning were the representatives of Germany, Portugal, Guatemala, South Africa, Pakistan, Colombia, Togo, France, Morocco, Azerbaijan, China, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Japan, Turkey, Norway and Finland.

The head of the European Union delegation also spoke.

The meeting began at 10:07 a.m. and ended at 12:53 p.m.

Background

The Council had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implication for international peace and security (document S/2012/133), which covers the activities of the United Nations in Afghanistan, as well as a summary of key events in the country since 13 December 2011. It also conveys the results of a comprehensive review of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), on the basis of which the Secretary-General recommends that the mandate of the Mission, expiring on 23 March 2012, be renewed for an additional 12 months.

The imperatives of the transition to Afghan leadership in all areas, the developments that have taken place over the past year, and Afghanistan's political and development agenda for 2012 should guide the Mission in the next year, the Secretary-General says. Good offices and political outreach in support of Afghan-led processes should become the essence of the UNAMA political mandate. Promoting the capacity of Afghan electoral institutions and the integrity of future electoral processes were also emphasized by interlocutors during the review. He added that human rights should become increasingly central to the Mission, and that promoting a coherent international civilian engagement behind the Afghan Government's development agenda remains a priority, including a concretization of the mutual commitments defined by the Afghan Government and its international partners in Bonn last year.

According to the report, security-related incidents declined in December 2011 (1,296) and January (1,286), compared to the previous months and the same months of the previous year, reflecting multiple factors, including the harsh winter and also disruption of insurgent activity by Afghan and international military operations. Armed clashes and improvised explosive devices accounted for nearly 60 per cent of the total of incidents, and the focus of military activities remained the south-eastern provinces and Kunar and Nangarhar provinces in the East. There were 9 suicide attacks in December 2011, and 12 in January and an intimidation campaign continued with the assassination of influential persons and members of the security forces. Major demonstrations, resulting in deaths, followed the Koran burnings at Bagram Airbase. On 4 February, UNAMA released its annual report for 2011 that found an increase in civilian casualties — 3,021 — for the fifth consecutive year.

Overall, the report says, the second tranche of transition has progressed as planned. Transition Implementation Plans for the 18 'tranche II' areas — setting out the process vis-à-vis security, strategic communications, governance and development issues — and Provincial Reconstruction Team evolution were agreed between the Government and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Transition provincial packages are being developed by the Ministry of Finance to support implementation of National Priority Programmes by geographic area.

"Informing all processes and politics now at play in Afghanistan are ambitious 2014 transition timelines," he said. Progress on governance, development and the rule of law were vital to a sustainable security transition. While there are reports of improved security in areas where the Afghan Local Police are operating, he says, human rights abuses against civilians have also been documented. Security initiatives should have clear lines of accountability, command and control linked to formal national security forces and institutions, namely the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police. In regard to international support for security, he adds that mutually agreed force requirements will have to be matched by resource commitments following the upcoming summit meeting in Chicago for NATO.

Given increasing fears of potential funding gaps for development, he says, the Government has rightly emphasized economic growth as a core priority. Within that context, the Government and donors should ensure continued investment in basic social services and human development. Provincial Reconstruction Teams require protection against assistance gaps and clarity on the handover of functions to the Afghan Government and institutions. In addition, while those in need must have access to humanitarian assistance, breaking the cycle of reliance on such assistance requires a focus on preventing further suffering while also finding durable solutions.

The Secretary-General also welcomes efforts to reach agreement on regional confidence-building measures. Noting a "cordial atmosphere" at the opening of the National Assembly session, he underlines the benefits of improved executive/legislative relations. Noting causes of concern in discussions of an Afghan-led peace process, he says that further discussions over the future functions and leadership of the High Peace Council could ensure an even more broad-based and inclusive process and enhanced national unity. In that context, human rights, including women's and children's rights and the reduction of all civilian casualties, must not be viewed as impediments to the process, but rather as critical elements.

Briefing

JAN KUBIŠ, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNAMA, said that 10 years after the fall of the Taliban, the Mission faced a different set of realities. As President Hamid Karzai said to the National Assembly, "Afghans are taking their destiny into their own hands", he said.

Political strategy was taking precedence over a military approach, the international military presence would finish by the end of 2014 and efforts continue to make national institutions capable of providing governance, rule of law, development and services.

"The profile and work of the United Nations in Afghanistan must continue to evolve to reflect these realities and must take full account of the principles and requirements of the transition process," he added. "Enhancing Afghan sovereignty and building self-reliance must be at the very core of the way we work."

In his wide consultations with national stakeholders, he drew hope from greater participation of women in Government and from the “unanimous expression of the desire for peace”, with not only the people, but also the international military forces often pushed to the limit by the conflict, its tragedies and pressures. “The message of the people is clear — it is time to wind down this war.” The People’s Dialogue, supported by UNAMA, had generated a lively debate about the peace process and revealed that corruption, lack of justice, abuse of authority and youth unemployment were among the greatest worries of ordinary Afghans. Near universal recognition of the value of the United Nation’s work in the country and a great desire for UNAMA’s continued presence were also expressed.

Offering condolences to the families of all casualties of recent incidences of violence, he praised those who urged a non-violent reaction to the accidental Koran burning and condemned incitement, which he said “only brought death and destruction”, first to Afghans, while also targeting international personnel there to help, including those at the UNAMA office in Kunduz, causing the temporary relocation of international staff. Appeals for their return had already been heard from local leaders, but he emphasized that the security of staff was of critical importance.

“Recent events should not eclipse positive trends,” he said, adding that they should not push the transition process off agreed plans and timetables. “The transition so far has been on target and the Afghan National Security Forces have proven that they are up to the task.” Upcoming meetings in Chicago and Tokyo on international assistance to the country should firm up those plans by specific commitments, he added. Beside security, transition also encompassed Afghan leadership and accountability in governance, rule of law, justice development and combating corruption to make the process sustainable, he stressed, including combat against drug trafficking and addressing the problem of displaced persons. As part of those efforts, “mutual commitments need to be respected by both the international community and Afghanistan”, he said. Predictable funding for the National Priority Programmes were particularly important. He saw the Kabul Bank issue as one potential stumbling block in firming up mutual commitments.

There was also a need to take further steps in electoral reform, noting that the 2014 presidential polls coincided with the planned culmination of the security transfer. Though elections alone did not make a democracy, a legitimate transfer of power yielding to a widely accepted mandate for the next President would seal the transition process. UNAMA’s human rights work was also seen as critical in his consultations, as 2011 was the fifth year in a row that civilian deaths rose, with insurgent attacks and landmines accounting for the majority of them. That was unacceptable and contradicted pledges by anti-Government forces. He called for the establishment of a civilian casualty mitigation unit within Afghan forces. Noting gains in detention conditions, he said it was important to build on those gains, given the transfer of detention facilities to Afghanistan.

Despite legal gains, violence against women and girls remained pervasive, with inconsistent response from authorities, he said. Enforcement of laws was crucial. UNAMA was committed to working with all stakeholders in that area, as well as work for the benefit of children. In furthering the gains of the reconciliation process, he underlined that gains should not be reached at the expense of the basic achievements of the past decade. UNAMA’s good-offices involvement in support of reconciliation was a matter of much discussion; he pledged to reinforce capacity in that area. Regional diplomatic activity had confirmed support for the peace process, and confidence-building measures were ongoing ahead of the Kabul ministerial meeting in June. He had exchanged views on such matters in visits to neighbouring countries.

In the near future, the Chicago conference must build on the agreed timelines for international troop withdrawal, with concrete commitments on the future shape of and support for Afghan forces. The Tokyo conference similarly required clearly agreed priorities and resources on non-military aspects. Reinforcing Afghan ownership, institutions and approaches must remain paramount. “I recognize that this can be slow and sometimes frustrating — on both sides. UNAMA works consistently and patiently for coherent approaches by the international community to supporting Afghanistan’s development and governance challenges,” he said. A top priority was greater coherence and effectiveness of United Nations efforts in all areas.

Statements

ZAHIR TANIN (Afghanistan) said the Council was meeting at a critical juncture in his country’s history; it was a time in which the culmination of Afghanistan’s efforts and those of the nations involved in the stabilization process over the past 10 years had reached “a moment of truth”. Today’s debate also fell within a line-up of important events that would shape the contours of the international community’s work during the transition and beyond: from the Bonn Conference this past December, to the Tokyo ministerial conference this coming July. After a decade, the Council was also examining a new framework for the United Nation’s mandate in Afghanistan.

He said that the transition process, which had begun with the transfer of responsibilities to Afghan security forces one year ago, was continuing apace. The country was now bearing the launch of the third phase of the transition, at the conclusion of which, the majority of Afghan territory would come under the Afghan Government’s control. By the end of the transition in 2014, Afghanistan would assume full responsibility of security, as well as ownership and leadership of governance and development.

“A paradigm shift is under way; the aim is sovereignty — empowering Afghanistan to take charge of its own destiny and turning the direct military and civilian action of the international community into a supporting role,” he declared, adding that a successful transition required renewed parameters of partnership between Afghanistan and the international community, with the guaranteed commitment of the continuation of military, political and financial support during the transition and the “decade of transformation” from 2015-2024. “This is what we, Afghanistan and the international community, set out to do last December in Bonn. This commitment will be supported concretely in Tokyo,” he said.

At this stage, he said that Afghan Government hoped the international community’s assistance would aim to help the country meet the requisite needs of its security forces. That would be crucial for the building-up, training and equipping of the national security forces, who in recent weeks had shown themselves increasingly capable in protecting their fellow Afghans. Further, the transition dividend, channelled into Afghanistan’s political stability, economic growth and social advancement would have a direct effect on fostering sustainable peace and bringing about real change in the lives of the Afghan people. “In the long term, what matters is the establishment and strengthening of enduring partnerships that will provide us with a solid base of mutual cooperation,” he said.

Continuing, he said that an effective transition was also contingent upon the successful outcome of an Afghan-led reconciliation, outreach and reintegration process. The dynamics of peace talks had shifted with the announcement of the opening of the Taliban office in Qatar, which the Afghan Government believed would provide fresh impetus to peace efforts. At the national level, outreach and reintegration efforts remained essential to bringing back members of the armed opposition into mainstream society. Nearly 3,500 anti-Government elements were now enrolled in the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme, and in the coming months, the Government expected to see many more joining the programme and returning to normal life.

Overall, he said that, for Afghans, a successful transition was the key for peace and stability. “We are all aware of the challenges, but the bitter memories of war and conflict only further our determination to work together to secure a peaceful future,” he said, emphasizing, however, that such confidence needed to be deepened by real cooperation, trust and mutual respect between Afghanistan and the international community. In that regard, he said that recent incidents, such as the brutal killing of 16 civilians, mostly women and children, in Kandahar, the burning of the Koran north of Kabul and similar atrocities “undermine our trust and cooperation by inciting deep sorrow, anger and frustration”. It was imperative that such incidents stop immediately and that the perpetrators be held accountable.

He said that the United Nations had been at the forefront of assisting the Afghan people over the past decade. It had supported the Government’s efforts towards building a more peaceful future for the country. While Afghanistan’s transition continued, the country would still benefit from the Organization’s support. With that in mind, he said the Government fully agreed with the Secretary-General’s report, particularly its findings that UNAMA should use its good offices to continue support for the Afghan-led political process and capacity-building for Afghan institutions. He also appreciated the United Nations work to promote the human rights of all the people of the country.

A long-term strategic view into the renewed posture of the United Nations in Afghanistan would be needed to answer some of the bigger questions about the Organization’s political role, the necessary steps towards reinforcing integration and “delivering as one,” as well as questions about bringing more transparency and accountability in managing resources and coordination of aid during the transition and transformation decade. “I am confident that, with our strong, ongoing partnership, Afghanistan and the United Nations are well equipped to address all future challenges,” he said.

As Afghanistan and the international community had stood together over the past decade to fight terrorism and to bring stability to that country, he said: “This fight is not finished. We still have a long way to go and we continue to struggle to normalize the situation in the country.” Yet, that was the aim of transition; and the transition to which all had agreed must be a responsible, unhurried and coordinated process. Afghanistan and its people counted on both the conscience and commitment of the international community to remain steadfast to the countless and long-reiterated assurances for a stable, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan.

PETER WITTIG ([Germany](#)) said that, in line with the follow-up to the Bonn Conference, the aims of the upcoming transformation decade 2015-2024 now required further spelling out in concrete terms. The upcoming conferences in Chicago and Tokyo would provide guidance in

that regard. While the international community would be expected to continue its support throughout that transformation phase, there would be equally high expectations of the Afghan side, including in fiscal responsibility and the protection and promotion of human rights. The Afghan Government's assistance would be necessary to outline and prioritize the country's national development strategies going forward. More work was needed to ensure that Afghan services and institutions were enhanced and strengthened to meet the needs of the Afghan people.

As for the renewal of UNAMA's mandate, he was pleased to report the "high degree of consensus" within the Council regarding that mandate, which reflected the Council's ongoing concern about the situation in Afghanistan. Germany shared the view of the Secretary-General that the United Nations still had much to offer Afghanistan, including in the area of elections. It also agreed that the protection and promotion of human rights should become central to UNAMA's mandate. He reiterated the clear consensus among Council members that the United Nations good offices regarding the Afghan-led and -owned processes should remain the emphasis of the Organization's engagement with the country. The new mandate would be a "milestone" in the relations between Afghanistan and the United Nations.

JOÃO MARIA CABRAL (Portugal) said that his delegation agreed with the basic proposals being considered in the text outlining a new mandate for UNAMA, as they were based on increased Afghan-ownership and leadership of the transformation process and of Afghan institutions. Such emphasis was a reflection of the increased confidence in those institutions to meet the needs of the people and country. At the same time, UNAMA's coordination role should be strengthened and reflected clearly in the terms of the draft resolution. He said that action must be taken to ensure that human rights challenges and humanitarian concerns were effectively addressed. Portugal welcomed UNAMA's capacity to promote human rights and the role of women. He hoped the mission would be able to continue to monitor the situation of children, and other areas of concern, such as the participation of women in political life.

As for the recent troubling incidents that had taken place in the country, he said that "apologies have been made and responsibilities accepted", and it was up to both the Afghan Government and its international partners to now ensure that forward progress was not endangered by those events. It was clear that the upcoming conferences and summits would be vital; the rapid sequence of those events was a reflection of the commitment of the international community to Afghanistan and to the goal of having that country seize control of its political future. Recent developments in the relations between State institutions were to be welcomed and should be supported by the Council. He reiterated his country's support for the "ambitious mandate" for the United Nations the Council was expected to approve next Thursday.

GERT ROSENTHAL (Guatemala) supported the aspirations of Afghanistan to become a democratic and prosperous country after so many years of being on the international agenda and said that, despite the complexity, progress in stability, rule and law and development must happen simultaneously. He regretted recent tragic incidents and stressed the need for creating an environment that was stable enough to transfer all responsibilities to the Afghans themselves. He welcomed the international political process for that purpose and called for an orderly follow-up, with deadlines for implementation. Upcoming international meetings provided opportunities in that context. The bigger picture must be kept in mind at all times and incidents should not derail progress, he advised.

On UNAMA, he commended the Mission and supported the recommendations of the review team, particularly the view of the Mission as facilitator, rather than implementer. More emphasis should be placed on the rights of women and children, electoral matters, coordination of international efforts country-wide, among other areas. He said it was a positive step that a number of armed groups had come on board during the reintegration process and supported the continuation of national reconciliation efforts. UNAMA should further support capacity-building in that area.

BASO SANGQU (South Africa) said that there had been notable progress in Afghanistan over the last few months, in particular towards inclusive national and regional processes to enhance peace, reintegration and reconciliation efforts. However, key challenges remained, such as the security situation and a worsening humanitarian situation. Given the magnitude of those challenges, a comprehensive strategy incorporating security, humanitarian efforts, good governance and socio-economic development was needed. While UNAMA continued to play the central role in supporting the Afghan Government in that regard, the continued role played by bilateral and multilateral partners remained indispensable. “There can be no military solution to the conflict in Afghanistan,” he said. Welcoming initiatives to engage with the armed opposition, he emphasized that such activities should be viewed as moving the country forward and should not in any way compromise the achievements made in the last 10 years.

Security at the national level should continue to be reinforced by efforts at the regional level to consolidate peace, stability and development. In that regard, there had been significant bilateral contact between Afghanistan and countries of the region which had resulted in strengthened economic, political, security and sociocultural links; the Istanbul Conference had further developed confidence-building measures to improve regional cooperation. South Africa welcomed the improved operational effectiveness of the Afghan National Security Forces, which was demonstrated by the increased number of Afghan-led and Afghan-partnered operations. That important development should be sustained. However, it was concerned by recent developments that saw increased tensions, and called on the International Security Assistance Force to mitigate the loss of civilian life and respect the cultural and religious heritage of the population. South Africa supported the extension of UNAMA’s mandate for another 12 months. “National ownership and leadership remains crucial to achieving political, security and socio-economic progress in Afghanistan as it enters this next phase of its transition,” he concluded.

RAZA BASHIR TARAR (Pakistan) said that, with its mandate reviewed and renewed, UNAMA should continue to align its efforts with the Afghan transition process. Therefore, the Security Council must enable the Mission to accomplish its goals through clear mandates based on current and emerging realities. UNAMA should not be used to impose concepts and values alien to Afghanistan. Above all, closer attention must be paid to the aspirations of Afghanistan’s people and leadership. As for the Secretary-General’s report, he said that survey rightly observed that progress in governance and the transfer of security responsibility were all fundamentally linked. The report had also highlighted the need to maintain the current political and financial interest in the transition process, with a view to setting Afghanistan on a sustainable course.

“ Pakistan is committed to peace, stability and development in Afghanistan,” he continued, stressing that the two countries were deepening their interaction in various fields, including security, development, transit, economic investment, infrastructure and energy. The Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Economic Commission had met in Islamabad last month to discuss modalities and timelines for various other trans-regional projects. In the area of security, Pakistan

had always sought closer engagement with Afghanistan and its international partners “on real issues, which lay beyond polemics”. In that realm, the interdiction of illegal cross-border movement was vital to counter terrorism, drug trafficking and commercial smuggling. That was a joint responsibility which must be discharged vigorously, he said, stressing that more than 120,000 Pakistani troops were deployed on his country’s side of the border at considerable cost. That effort needed to be matched on the other side of the border.

Specifically on drugs, which he called a growing challenge for Afghanistan and the wider international community, he said the collective goal must be the complete eradication of poppy cultivation in that country, as well as the progressive elimination of manufacturing and trafficking of its higher derivatives. More attention needed to be paid to that issue, which had worsened recently. Finally, he reminded the Council of the large number of Afghan refugees in Iran, as well as Pakistan. After a decade, that issue must be dealt with and he urged greater international focus on those refugees. He hoped that the upcoming conference in Switzerland would be a success.

HARDEEP SINGH PURI ([India](#)) said the past few months had witnessed high-level regional and international activities and events regarding Afghanistan and he believed the conferences scheduled for the remainder of 2012 would be instrumental in working out clearly defined and tangible commitments in critical areas, such as security, governance, trade promotion, investment, development and regional cooperation. Afghanistan currently faced many challenges in those areas and would need an enormous amount of assistance over time. Security challenges would for the most part remain paramount, as the gains made in that area over the past decade remained “tenuous and fragile”. Terrorist violence showed no signs of receding and civilian casualties attributed to anti-Government elements had continued to rise over the past five years, hitting a peak in 2011.

Terrorism continued to draw sustenance and support from a dangerous mix of ideologies and ambitions in the region, with suicide terrorism as its main technique and its targets not limited to Afghanistan. “We need concerted action to isolate and root out the syndicate of terrorism which included elements of Al-Qaida, Taliban, Laskar-e-Taiba and other extremist groups mainly operating outside the borders of Afghanistan,” he said, stressing that that country needed enhanced assistance and support to build its capacity to tackle the challenges of terrorism, the religious extremism that fuelled it, and the drug trafficking that sustained it. All efforts must be made to strengthen national security forces, including through providing assistance for training and capacity-building.

“With the gradual drawing down of international forces from their combat role, there are already signs of a transition recession,” he continued, encouraging stakeholders to find ways to ensure that Afghanistan did not feel abandoned — at least in terms of the quality, if not quantity, of international assistance — post-2014. He said that Afghanistan needed a comprehensive strategy for domestic development that took into account its least developed country status, its landlocked situation, 30 years of conflict and the continued existential threat to the country’s future posed by terrorism. Such a strategy should include, among others, security cooperation, official development assistance, capacity-building and education, trade access and foreign investments commensurate with its needs.

NÉSTOR OSORIO ([Colombia](#)) lent his full support to the initiative described by Mr. Kubiš and expressed optimism over progress in the transition to national leadership in

Afghanistan. The capacity and professionalism of security forces must continue to be increased, however, to meet the agreed timetables. Recent security incidents should not hamper such agreements. He supported dialogue to resolve differences, in that light. The transition, he stressed, should also take into account the improvement of living conditions to strengthen stability. He reiterated his call on all parties to meet their human rights and humanitarian responsibilities and to show clearly their support for the reconciliation process. He hoped that the Taliban would commit in good faith to support the Afghan Constitution. The One UN concept should be pursued in all relevant areas and the United Nations should play a central role in coordinating international efforts, he added, stressing the continued relevance of the Kabul framework in the transition to Afghan leadership in all areas.

KODJO MENAN (Togo), welcoming improvements in Afghan capacity in security, reconciliation, governance, extension of national authority, women's participation and combating corruption, said that they had only been possible in a conducive regional and international context. He hoped that the regional conference planned for Kabul in June would further improve that context. The implementation of mutual commitments defined in Bonn were important in that light. He was pleased to note that UNAMA was successfully implementing its mandate and he congratulated the entire United Nations system for its support to Afghan leadership in all areas. In facing continued security challenges, including local power struggles, it was important that inclusive dialogue be established throughout the country. All neighbouring countries must participate in efforts to fight the illicit drug trade. Supporting the extension of UNAMA's mandate, he stressed that continued international assistance was critical in facing all Afghanistan's remaining challenges.

GÉRARD ARAUD (France) said a strategic review of UNAMA's activities had been carried out and the United Nations engagement with Afghanistan would soon enter a new phase. That new situation would fully reflect the changes that had been taking place in that country, in light of the transition process. It would also look forward to the aims of the "transformation decade" ahead. The Special Representative would need to ensure that the Mission continued to stay on course during the transformation process.

The situation in Afghanistan was still volatile and each week seemed to bring its share of challenges. France hoped the political process under way would bring a lasting peace to the country and bring together all factions of Afghan society. He noted that the Istanbul Conference had "given a boost" to efforts to address security concerns, including at the regional level. France planned to draw down its NATO participation at the end of 2013, but would maintain its commitment to Afghanistan as the transformation process unfolded in 2015. Indeed, France would bolster its civilian engagement with Afghanistan in such areas as agriculture. The future success of Afghanistan depended in great measure on the success of UNAMA and France would continue to support the work of the Mission as the new phase in United Nations engagement began.

MOHAMMED LOULICHKI (Morocco) noted the progress made in the situation in Afghanistan, including in political dialogue, the implementation of the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme and the health and education sectors. However, the security situation remained a real concern, as the high numbers of civilian casualties — particularly among women and children — continued to hamper a sustained peace settlement and stability for the country, and targeted assassinations of high-ranking Government officials, members of the Security Forces and influential political and religious leaders continued. Despite those challenges, he

said, “we cannot fail to recognize that approximately 50 per cent of the Afghan population lives in areas where security responsibility is handed over to Afghan Security Forces”.

Morocco endorsed the recommendations listed in the comprehensive review of UNAMA’s mandated activities, and supported a comprehensive and inclusive Afghan-led and Afghan-owned political process, which should lead Afghan authorities to address the challenges of stabilizing the country and reconciling different factions. It supported the extension of the mandate of UNAMA for 12 months. Morocco further supported the Afghan Government for the ongoing Transition period, and considered that the phase of transformation from 2015 to 2024 would enable Afghanistan to completely build its institutions and achieve a democratic and stable country, based on the rule of law and the respect for human rights. Morocco encouraged the country to pursue a political dialogue with its neighbouring countries, and urged it to work in cooperation with its neighbours in order to assure a voluntary repatriation of refugees to their homeland, as well as the return of more than 500,000 internally displaced persons.

AGSHIN MEHDIYEV ([Azerbaijan](#)) expected that progress in recent years would ensure the Organization’s work in Afghanistan was more coordinated and efficient. The precarious security situation continued to threaten overall peace and stabilization efforts. Recent security incidents showed that more resolute measures were needed to eliminate civilian casualties, which, in addition to being tragic, seriously undermined national and international peace and reconciliation efforts. He was encouraged by progress, thus far, in implementing the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme. As international military forces would withdraw and hand over security functions to the Afghan Security Forces by the end of 2014, it was becoming more imperative that the international community actively support the Afghan Government. Meantime, the mutual commitments made at the Bonn Conference must be implemented to ensure that, during the current transition period, the necessary foundation was set up to allow for the creation of a fully functioning, sustainable Afghan State during the decade to follow.

The positive momentum established after last November’s Istanbul Conference should be further developed, he said. The follow-up ministerial conference in June would be important for ensuring greater coherence within existing regional mechanisms. Stronger regional ties would help increase foreign investment in Afghanistan. Azerbaijan had been steadily increasing its military contribution to the ISAF. A significant percentage of supplies and personnel for ISAF operations — including 35 per cent of non-lethal cargo — transited Azerbaijan by air and land. That figure was up from 25 per cent in 2011. Azerbaijan was expanding its non-military engagement by helping to develop capacity in Afghanistan. He cited several projects to train Afghan military personnel on mine action, combating terrorism and border protection, and civilian personnel on public diplomacy, the rule of law, good governance and management of the transition period.

LI BAODONG ([China](#)) said that currently, peacebuilding in Afghanistan was at a crucial juncture. The country would enter a transformation decade in 2015 and ensuring that phase got off to a good start was a major task for the Government and the international community. All stakeholders must build on the achievements made during the transition process. China welcomed the fact that Afghan institutions were slowly and steadily taking over responsibility in various fields. However, long-term peace and stability could not take hold without the support of the international community. In that regard, China hoped the international community would respect sovereignty and territorial integrity, and support the priorities outlined by the Government.

He said that China also hoped the international community would give greater attention to Afghanistan's reconstruction and to improving its economy. He was concerned by recent troubling incidents, including the killing of 16 civilians in Kandahar and the burning of the Koran and he hoped that remaining questions would be resolved properly. China supported the Secretary-General's recommendations on extending UNAMA's mandate for 12 months. As a friendly neighbour of Afghanistan, China had been taking an active part in supporting the country and would continue to play its role to the best of its ability to ensure Afghanistan became peaceful and stable.

VITALY CHURKIN (Russian Federation) said a long-term settlement in Afghanistan was a key task for the international community. The efforts undertaken must lay the foundation for democratic processes, economic recovery and the establishment of a prosperous State free from the threats of terrorism and drugs. Currently, the situation in Afghanistan was "far from stable," especially against the background of the national forces' inability to clamp down on terrorism and drugs. Ongoing terrorist activity was a major concern. Moreover, "oil was often poured on the fire" by the actions of ISAF, as evidenced by the spate of "recent unfortunate incidents".

In all this, he said it was important not to establish artificial deadlines for the withdrawal of security support. Indeed, one of the international community's main aims was to ensure the preparations of a viable national security structure. ISAF troops must fully carry out their mandate to effectively and comprehensively address security challenges and put an end to threats in Afghanistan. The Russian Federation trusted that there would be a final report presented to the Council before coalition forces were withdrawn. He went on to say that national reconciliation processes must be led by the Afghan authorities themselves. He was seriously concerned by the ongoing illegal production and trade of drugs, "which is a direct and open threat to international peace and security".

While it was clear that the illegal drug trade could only be effectively tackled if all stakeholders worked together, the current trends did not instil much hope, he said. Tackling poppy production and illicit drug trafficking must be a "real priority" for ISAF. And while he acknowledged that assiduous efforts must be made to address the threat along the whole of the route of the drug trade, he underscored that, without measures to deal with crops in Afghanistan, "we will just be dealing with the symptoms". He said that Russia was still concerned that more than 3,000 civilians had been killed over the past year, up 8 per cent from the year before. It was, therefore, necessary to ensure that all parties in Afghanistan upheld human rights and did not destroy Afghan infrastructure. Finally, he said he was concerned that the Secretary-General's report contained scant mention of the terrorist threat posed by Al-Qaida or of relevant Security Council sanctions. That gave the impression that there were no problems in that area. An honest assessment of the situation in the country was necessary in order to plot a viable course forward, he said.

ROSEMARIE DICARLO (United States) said that her country was committed to continuing its partnership with Afghanistan through 2014 and beyond. Pointing to significant steps in the transition to Afghan security leadership, as well as consolidation of regional and international support to the reconciliation process, she said that the upcoming Chicago security summit would be particularly important in shifting international forces to a support role by 2013. Conveying condolences over the recent killing of civilians, she said that "this incident was tragic and shocking", and reaffirmed a commitment to get the facts and ensure accountability. Turning to the illicit trade in narcotics, she described programmes that held promise in stemming the problem. The problem must be addressed worldwide through a common response, however.

Supporting UNAMA's mandate extension, she said that the United Nations played a critical role in development, regional cooperation, humanitarian assistance and many other areas in Afghanistan. She commended UNAMA for "vision and tenacity".

MARK LYALL GRANT (United Kingdom), speaking in his national capacity, said that this year must be utilized to firm up commitments to Afghanistan through 2014 and beyond. Vital governance and economic reforms on the part of the Government must be supported in a sustainable way at upcoming international and regional conferences. He welcomed efforts to advance the peace and reconciliation process, adding that his country's support for that process did not waver with setbacks, as the complexity of the challenges had to be acknowledged. He supported a strong UNAMA presence throughout the country to assist the implementation of Government programmes, as well as the coherence and effectiveness of international aid.

GUILLERMO E. RISHCHYNSKI (Canada) expressed his Government's continued commitment to support Afghanistan in its transition by: investing in Afghan youth through health and education programmes; advancing security, the rule of law and human rights, including through a significant contribution to the NATO training mission; promoting regional diplomacy; and supporting the delivery of humanitarian assistance, as needed. He called on the Afghan Government to continue its efforts to establish a business-friendly environment and enact measures to strengthen effective and transparent economic governance. "The country must never again become a haven for terrorists and a breeding ground for terrorism," he said, and to that end, stressed the need to create wealth by attracting and retaining private-sector investment from within the country and overseas.

He noted the tremendous gains made by Afghan women and girls over the last decade, saying that Canada views the status and role of women as "a key barometer" for measuring Afghanistan's progress. However, the recent Ulema Council statement and cases of heinous abuse of Afghan women was a dramatic step backwards. "Canada will remain vigilant," he said. The advancement of women's rights had been, and continued to be, a key pillar in Canada's foreign policy. That was especially true in Afghanistan. He went on to highlight the importance of tolerance and pluralism in establishing a peaceful and cohesive Afghan society based the principles upheld by the Afghan Constitution. Canada supported an inclusive national peace dialogue that encouraged the participation of Afghan civil society, victims' groups and especially Afghan religious and ethnic minorities and women in determining "the shape of what we all hope will be a peaceful and stable Afghanistan". In closing, he said Canada stands ready to continue working with the Afghan Government and its international partners.

THOMAS MAYR-HARTING, head of the European Union delegation, stated his firm commitment to global long-term engagement in Afghanistan, as outlined in the 14 November 2011 European Union Council Conclusions. As the international community prepared for the upcoming conferences in Chicago and Tokyo, the mutual commitments made in Bonn must be swiftly implemented. He noted with satisfaction that the transition remained on track in the security sector and that tranche II was progressing well. He called for more coherent international aid to the national priority programmes identified by the Afghan Government. The Organization's continued involvement in long-term electoral reform would help strengthen the Afghan Government and the country's institutions. He stressed the importance of continuing UNAMA's support to Afghan Government efforts to bolster transparency and accountability. Such support required a UNAMA presence throughout the country. The peace and reconciliation process must be truly inclusive, with equal representation of women and men and people of various social strata.

“Both the process and its outcome must respect the Afghan Constitution, including its human rights provisions and notably the rights of women and girls,” he said. He called for further implementation of the law on eliminating violence against women, and reiterated his commitment to Council resolution 1325 (2000) and all subsequent texts on women, peace and security. He lauded the Afghan Government’s creation of an inter-ministerial steering committee to fully implement resolution 1325 (2000). He was encouraged by the follow-up to the Istanbul conference on regional cooperation. For example, the Senior Officials Preparatory Meeting in Kabul held in February had laid the groundwork for the Kabul Ministerial Meeting scheduled for June. More progress was needed to translate promises into tangible improvements in regional security and economic development. Regional cooperation would be indispensable to address common threats, such as drug trafficking.

DAMIAN WHITE ([Australia](#)) said that the foundations of the international community’s long-term commitment to Afghanistan — which must extend well beyond 2014 — would need to be further consolidated this year through “strong and clearly defined outcomes” on a security transition at the upcoming NATO Summit in Chicago, and on support for sustainable development at the July Tokyo conference. As the transition continued to roll out across Afghanistan, with more than 50 per cent of the country’s population now living in districts undergoing transfer to full Afghan security leadership, Australia encouraged the Council to ensure the message of the importance of that leadership was given prominence in UNAMA’s revised mandate. Welcoming the Mission’s continued presence in Afghanistan, he supported its ongoing role in electoral capacity-building and ensuring transparent and credible democratic institutions, especially in light of upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections set respectively for 2014 and 2015.

He went on to say that Afghanistan’s prospects for a secure and stable future would be “much diminished” without the strong and constructive support of its neighbours and regional partners. The Australian Government welcomed the Istanbul “heart of Asia” process as an important step towards building stronger regional engagement, including improved economic ties with Afghanistan across Central Asia. As for Australia’s own engagement, he said a long-term bilateral partnership with that country would be set up, which would extend well past 2014 and cover a broad range of bilateral activities, including development assistance. The main goal of Australian aid was to build the Afghan Government’s capacity to deliver services and economic opportunities to its people.

TSUNEO NISHIDA ([Japan](#)) said it was critically important that UNAMA continue to play an appropriate role in support of Afghanistan’s leadership and ownership, along with the international community towards building a promising future for that country. He welcomed the report that the second tranche of the transition had progressed as planned, but there had also been some shocking incidents recently. They must not be repeated; the cycle of violence must be stopped. It was incumbent on both Afghanistan and its international partners to tackle common challenges of improving security, as well as consolidating the Afghan-led political process. In that regard, Japan continued to provide assistance in the security area, so as to strengthen the capacity of the Afghan police, and the reintegration process. Last month Japan decided to provide a total of \$585 million, inclusive of some \$231 million for police assistance and \$5 million for promoting reintegration.

Building on the Bonn and Istanbul Conferences last year, Japan was set to make this year even more productive, pointing to the NATO summit in Chicago focusing on security issues

in May and the Tokyo conference in July. Both of those would be the best occasions to discuss the future of Afghanistan. Notably, the Tokyo conference, co-hosted by Japan and Afghanistan, was expected to build on a solid foundation towards Afghanistan's sustainable economic development through the transition period and beyond, based on the mutual commitments between the international community and Afghanistan made at the Bonn Conference. At the same time, the Afghan side was expected to make the utmost efforts to tackle issues of governance, such as corruption, and show concrete improvements prior to the Tokyo conference. He, thus, welcomed Afghanistan's recently organized forum to discuss governance. Concluding, he supported the extension of UNAMA's mandate, adding that Japan was determined to exert all efforts in cooperation with Afghanistan, international partners and UNAMA in order to make the Tokyo conference a success.

ERTUĞRUL APAKAN (Turkey), expressing sadness over the loss of 12 Turkish soldiers in a helicopter crash in Kabul, reaffirmed his country's strong commitment to helping Afghanistan in its efforts for a peaceful, secure and democratic country. He noted that the Istanbul process commits Afghanistan and its neighbours to a new vision of partnership for peace, stability and prosperity in the region. At the Istanbul Conference, the parties recognized the central role of the United Nations, but Afghanistan had been actively leading the follow-up process, which he said was ongoing in a constructive atmosphere. The regional vision would enable Afghanistan to play its long-desired role as a regional hub for trade and transit. Expressing satisfaction on progress in the security sector transition, he underlined the importance of upcoming international conferences, as well as the role of UNAMA, which should continue to be guided by the priorities of the Afghan Government, including the objectives of regional cooperation and coherent international engagement.

TINE MØRCH SMITH (Norway) said that her delegation welcomed the renewal of UNAMA's mandate, whose essence was "political, not technical". As the transfer of power from international to Afghan ownership gradually continued, UNAMA's role as the guarantor for the integrity of the process would become indispensable. "UNAMA serves the purpose of both supporting the Afghan Government and to empower the Afghan people in their tireless efforts to build a peaceful and democratic future," she said. Good offices and political outreach in supporting an inclusive Afghan-led process for political settlement and monitoring human rights remained essential to UNAMA's mandate; it was vital that the United Nations continued to promote the capacity of Afghan electoral institutions. UNAMA should also focus on supporting the Afghan Government in becoming more accountable, transparent and inclusive.

Moving towards transition, it was important that the efforts to promote human rights also strengthened the Afghan State's ability to fight impunity and protect the rights of its citizens, she continued. It was also vital that the necessary monitoring and watchdog functions of the Afghan Human Rights Commission, civil society groups and free media were not undermined. "Afghanistan needs a political settlement that brings the insurgents and key political and social groups, including civil society, on board to address the root causes of the conflict", she said, adding that, in the long run, the most sustainable basis for peace would be formed by broadening the political space. Further, all parties must respect the achievements of the past decade, in particular Afghanistan's international human rights obligations and core principles enshrined in the Afghan Constitution. Additionally, women's rights and the empowerment of women should be a critical element of the peace process, and must remain at the top of the agenda.

JARMO VIINANEN (Finland), aligning himself with the statement of the European Union, said in the intertwined processes advancing in Afghanistan, it was crucial that progress in human

rights and gender equality were not compromised. Remarkable gains had been made by women and girls since the overthrow of the Taliban, but much remained to be done, particularly in the areas of health services and schooling, he added, noting that Finland and Afghanistan had been cooperating in the area of women, peace and security through a “twinning” programme, which aimed at inclusive and transparent coordination in implementing the national action plan on women.

Other focuses of his country’s increased development funding in Afghanistan would be good governance, rule of law and economic growth. Accelerated progress was needed in all those areas, particularly at the subnational level. “People must see positive changes in their daily life and be able to trust their authorities,” he said. “The voices of civil society need to be heard and the rights and security of human rights defenders and journalists ensured,” he added. Towards those goals, the international community must give its full support to the Afghan Government beyond the transition period. He gave Finland’s commitment in that context.