

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

Statement by Mr. Mr. Eler, Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations.

I would like to begin my statement by thanking the Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing this morning.

We welcome recent positive signals coming from Afghanistan. As the transition approaches completion, we see promising signs that Afghans are ready to assume responsibility for their future.

We are moving towards the fifth tranche of transition, with 87 per cent of the Afghan population already under Afghan-led security. The decline in security-related incidents is a positive signal. The capabilities of Afghan security forces are developing. Boosting their capacities and competence further, under the rule of law framework, remains a key priority.

The preparations for the 2014 elections are well under way. We support all efforts towards achieving a democratic and inclusive political process through independent, free and fair elections, with the participation of political parties and civil society. In that regard, we commend the efforts of the Independent Election Commission, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the United Nations Development Programme.

Transition and reconciliation processes are mutually reinforcing. The successful continuation of Afghan-led peace and reconciliation efforts will constitute another important step towards security, stability and political transition. We welcome progress in that area under the successful guidance of Mr. Rabbani, head of the High Peace Council, as well as the political facilitation efforts of UNAMA. The concrete support by the Government of Pakistan for Afghan peace and reconciliation efforts is noteworthy. Turkey will continue to support the process, keeping the best interests of the Afghan people in mind.

Despite those positive signs, major political, economic and security challenges remain. The security situation continues to be a matter of grave concern, leading to unacceptable human costs. Natural disasters, chronic poverty and development challenges pose grave threats. The most vulnerable segments of society, especially children, women and girls, are under heightened risk. The potential humanitarian and economic consequences of transition are worrisome.

As Afghanistan moves forward towards political and security transitions, we must remain in touch with those realities on the ground. We commend the constructive steps taken by the Afghan people and Government to overcome those problems. The continued display of will from the international community will strengthen the hopes of the Afghan people for the future and help to ensure that a smooth transition is under way.

In that regard, we are glad to see increased efforts to move to substantive issues in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, both from the Afghan Government and the international community, to ensure the concrete implementation of mutual commitments. We commend the endorsement of the new national priority programmes and the aid management policy.

As the international presence is being reduced, regional cooperation is gaining momentum. The Istanbul Process has surpassed all expectations with its speedy progress. The spirit of regional ownership, the engagement and technical support of the United Nations and its agencies and the interest and support of the international community have made that possible. We were pleased to see the endorsement, at the meeting of senior officials held in Baku on 6 February, of the implementation plans for the six confidence-building measures. The next meeting of senior officials,

which is to be held on 25 March in Kabul, will smooth out the final details of the implementation plans, which have been endorsed in principle. The momentum will be strengthened even further at the next ministerial meeting to be held in Almaty on 26 April — the only meeting on Afghanistan thus far scheduled at the Foreign Ministers' level for 2013.

Trilateral and quadrilateral initiatives are important tools for fostering regional ownership in the Heart of Asia process. In that spirit, the trilateral summit process among Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkey has contributed to regional dialogue and cooperation through the seven meetings held since 2007. The most recent trilateral meeting, convened in Ankara last December under the theme "Connectivity", focused on political dialogue, military and security issues, peace and reconciliation efforts, and economic development and partnership. Further connectivity will facilitate economic development, stability and self-sustainability. We attach particular importance to the completion and maintenance of local railroad and land routes, the development of regional economic projects and the enhancement of civil aviation capabilities.

We welcome all projects and cooperation efforts to foster further regional connectivity and economic growth. The constructive engagement of Afghanistan's regional partners will remain key to addressing common challenges, such as terrorism, barriers to trade and investment, drug-trafficking and refugees.

As Afghanistan's regional and international partners, we should spare no effort to contribute to the vision of a secure, peaceful and self-sufficient Afghanistan. That is in all of our mutual interests. Turkey will always remain in solidarity with the Afghan people and will continue to contribute to a safe, secure and prosperous Afghanistan, as we have done for many decades.

In conclusion, I would like to voice our strong belief that the United Nations will continue to play its crucial role after the transition. I would like to take this opportunity to especially commend the valuable efforts of the United Nations, and of UNAMA in particular, in taking the Istanbul Process further, as well as to express our heartfelt gratitude to Special Representative Ján Kubiš and his hard-working team.