

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

Statement by Mr. Parham, Permanent Mission of United Kingdom to the United Nations.

Let me start by thanking the Secretary-General for his report (S/2013/133) and his statement this morning. We welcome back to the Council Special Representative Ján Kubiš. I would also like to thank Ambassador Tanin for his contribution to today's debate, as well as to thank Foreign Minister Carr and the delegation of Australia for their leadership in the Council on the issue before us.

The United Kingdom welcomes today's adoption of resolution 2096 (2013), which renews the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for a further 12 months. Let me take this opportunity to note the continued leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the hard work of his staff throughout the past year.

I would like to focus my comments today on four areas, namely, the transition of security responsibility to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), the progress on, and prospects for, peace and reconciliation, the preparations for elections in 2014, and, more broadly, the international community's long-term commitment to Afghanistan.

Turning first to the security transition to the Afghan National Security Forces, let me pay tribute to all the women and men of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan and to the members of the Afghan National Security Forces who work alongside them. They continue to carry out their duties with great professionalism and courage. The United Kingdom is grateful for their outstanding contribution to the peace and security of Afghanistan.

ISAF has continued to transition security to the ANSF on schedule. This year, with the announcement of the fifth tranche, the ANSF will take the leading responsibility for the security of the whole Afghan population, approximately 27 million people. As the ANSF continues to grow in confidence and operational experience, so will the confidence that the Afghan population has in them grow. We remain convinced that they will be ready, willing and able to effectively manage Afghanistan's security after 2014, and to tackle any residual insurgent threat. They will have the full support of the United Kingdom and of the international community in doing so.

But tackling security concerns is only part of the picture. Tangible and lasting progress on peace and reconciliation must go hand in hand with that. In recent months, we have seen strong consensus emerge that a broad, inclusive political settlement offers the best prospect for peace and stability in Afghanistan.

We particularly welcome the efforts of Afghanistan and Pakistan to strengthen their relationship and their common understanding of the Afghan peace and reconciliation process. In February, the leaders of both countries agreed to increase cooperation between military and intelligence establishments, to strengthen coordination on Taliban prisoner releases from Pakistani detention, and to support the opening of an office in Doha for the purpose of peaceful negotiations between the Afghan High Peace Council and authorized representatives of the Taliban. That sends a clear message to the Taliban: now is the time to participate in a peaceful political process.

Another pillar in a sustainable peace will be credible elections that reflect the will of the Afghan people. Afghan-led preparations for presidential and provincial council elections in 2014 have started, and decisions have been taken on issues such as voter registration. The time is short, and the Afghan parliament should now prioritize consideration of electoral reforms. It is also important that the Independent Election Commission and Afghan authorities work to establish credible mechanisms to deal with complaints and to prevent fraud.

I have on many occasions emphasized the United Kingdom's long-term commitment to the Afghan people. Let me do so again. The United Kingdom will deliver on all our commitments to Afghanistan, now and beyond 2014. The United Kingdom's support for

Afghanistan will be defined by more than just security. We will pursue a relationship built on prosperity, diplomacy and development, as set out in the enduring strategic partnership document signed in 2012.

The Afghan Government, with the support of the international community, should continue to make further progress in the areas that underpin sustained economic growth and development. Those include, in particular, areas such as education, health and other basic services for women and girls, as well as strengthened respect for human rights so that all can play a full part in the collective life of a stable and prosperous Afghanistan.

Mutual accountability is of paramount importance in order to achieve our shared objectives. The United Kingdom attaches great importance to that and will seek to play a major role in supporting our shared responsibilities, holding each other to account for the promises that we have made. We look forward to co-chairing the first ministerial review of progress against the Tokyo commitments in 2014.

As Afghanistan moves from transition into the transformation decade, we are focused on the great opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. A stable, secure and prosperous Afghanistan is in all our interests, and it is nothing less than that the Afghan people deserve.