



United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Strategic Communication and Spokespersons Unit, Kabul, Afghanistan

SRSG Statement

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OPENING STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR AFGHANISTAN, JÁN KUBIŠ, AT THE MEETING OF THE JOINT COORDINATION AND MONITORING BOARD (JCMB)

Kabul, 29 January 2014

Excellencies, I am honoured to co-chair today's special Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board meeting together with Minister Zakhilwal. I think we can all agree that while there have been some long meetings, and a few tough moments, discussions have been undertaken in a spirit of partnership.

This meeting is an important opportunity not only to take stock of progress against commitments made at the 2012 Tokyo Conference but equally importantly to reconfirm a forward-looking agenda. Mutual accountability between Afghanistan and its international partners, which is at the very heart of the Tokyo Framework, is reflected in the Joint Report.

This is a critical juncture for Afghanistan and there is a clear need for unity of effort in accelerating implementation of mutual commitments.

The Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework is the agreed instrument of civilian development assistance. Together with NATO Chicago Summit commitments to predictable, long-term support to the security sector, it forms the cornerstone of international engagement with Afghanistan.

It stands as an enduring legacy of President Hamid Karzai's administration when, in a time of change, the need is certainty, predictability, continuity of commitment and sustained momentum.

There is no post-2014 discontinuity in assistance, we are not poised at the top of a cliff as some doomsayers predict. The international community, including the United Nations, while clear about the need for progress against mutual commitments, remains resolute in its long-term support for Afghanistan. Moreover I welcome increasing regional engagement and cooperation, both bilaterally and through multilateral efforts.

Excellencies,

In just over two months' time, on 5 April, there is to be a historic moment of political transition. I commend the Government of Afghanistan's commitment to the holding of credible and inclusive elections, in line with the Constitution. The timely passage of key electoral legislation and establishment of the three electoral management bodies have helped ensure that preparations are at a more advanced stage than previous polls, with improvements to the quality and credibility of the process.

It is the responsibility of the independent electoral institutions, Government of Afghanistan, and political forces - including presidential candidates - to ensure representative and inclusive elections of integrity. Combating fraud and guarding against internal and external inference are also vital to ensuring an outcome widely accepted by Afghans. The legitimacy of the future administration will necessarily be a prerequisite for strong leadership of the country, and its unity, as well as sound partnership with the international community.

I welcome the presidential candidates who join us here today. You are a vital bridge to the future in helping ensure continuity in Afghanistan's development, economic, and rights agendas through the delicate period of leadership change.

While you are observers for this morning's meeting, I look forward to your input this afternoon as we look forward to the decade of transformation. Both today, and when the formal electoral campaign gets underway next week, it is important for the Afghan people to hear clear visions for the future, including a commitment to sustaining and accelerating progress on Tokyo commitments.

Excellencies,

The level of international assistance pledged to Afghanistan, to help meet the country's needs through the transformation period, is truly exceptional.

Over USD 5.7 billion disbursed since the Tokyo Conference with the international community pledging that funding will be provided in ways that are predictable and increasingly aligned with national priorities. Improving aid effectiveness means that such assistance must reinforce Afghan institutions and Afghan systems. These are the principles at the very heart of the transition process and they are increasingly being put into practice.

The Government of Afghanistan in turn committed to an agenda of essential reforms in reinforcing good governance, financial sustainability and human rights, including the rights of women and children. Afghanistan's future stability depends on representative, accountable institutions together with a regulatory environment which encourages donor and investor confidence - and generates employment opportunities.

Similarly, protecting and consolidating a rights-based agenda needs to be recognised as a critical element of institutional legitimacy and effectiveness - and include a strong role for civil society.

Accelerated progress is essential for the Afghan people, who need to have the confidence to invest in their future. Clear results and fulfilment of commitments is also critical for sustained donor engagement at a time when there are numerous competing international priorities and economic challenges in many capitals.

I note the recent International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions' decision to defer the re-accreditation of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. Commitment to meeting the recommendations for protecting and strengthening the institution and its autonomy is now vital in ensuring the body retains its "A" rating.

Excellencies,

Substantive and truly impressive progress has been achieved over the last 12 years by Afghan authorities and the Afghan people, with the generous support of the international community.

Notable among the dramatic improvements in the lives of the Afghan people are the expanded provision of education and health, the improved state of roads and infrastructure, and the promotion of women's rights and freedom of speech.

Civil society and the private sector has played an active part in these achievements and I welcome the participation of their representatives at this gathering. Today, and going forwards, civil society will have an important role in ensuring that diverse voices are heard and in holding us all to account.

In terms of Government commitments made at Tokyo, we have seen the most progress in the legislative framework – particularly on elections. There have been notable recent achievements with provincial budgeting and reporting on progress under the law on the Elimination of Violence Against Women. For ultimately it is progress in implementing legislation that counts, not simply its passage.

Looking forward, we need to be realistic about the daunting scale of challenges that remain. It is results – real improvement in the lives of the Afghan people – that matter, not box-ticking exercises.

Excellencies,

Afghanistan's economy has been distorted by years of war and over the last decade by the sheer scale of the international intervention. There is now the opportunity to return to a more normal development agenda.

The challenges are clear given a rising fiscal gap, with lower than expected Government revenue collection, massive security expenditure, and rising costs. If the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework is to remain a useful instrument, and the expected results are to be delivered, then increased attention is needed to broad-based, inclusive and sustainable economic development and poverty reduction coupled with job creation.

Streamlining a development agenda, focused on agreed national priorities, is essential to the sustainability of the political and security transitions. Afghanistan's increasing self-reliance and true integration into the global economy require comprehensive efforts to strengthen the licit economy and undercut the burgeoning illicit economy.

Most notably narcotics production, trade and consumption industry need to be recognised as a threat to the well-being of the population, economy and institutions of Afghanistan, the region and beyond. Drugs present a shared danger and comprehensive approaches to tackling this scourge are a shared responsibility. A sound, long-term, integrated strategy shared by the

Government of Afghanistan and its regional and key international partners is required. Genuine political will be essential to its implementation over many years.

Similarly, systematic efforts to overcome corruption and impunity must be core tasks, understood as critical for investor and donor confidence. Donor governments, who are accountable to their own constituents for taxpayer funds, require reassurance if there are to be significant increases in the provision of "on budget" financing.

Greater efforts are still required in meeting the International Monetary Fund programme, including accountability for the failure of the Kabul Bank and building a financial sector and regulatory framework trusted by Afghans and the international community.

Excellencies,

In looking forward to the Tokyo follow-up Ministerial meeting later this year, it cannot be business as usual. We are talking about no less than the viability of Afghanistan's transition processes. This means the future sustainability, stability and prosperity of both Afghanistan and the region.

Necessary foundations are being established are or already in place. The political and security transitions are on track, albeit with bumps on the way.

I am however emphasising that these must be grounded in a sustainable, ongoing economic transition in which Afghanistan is increasingly self-reliant. This was the mutual commitment at Tokyo and a partnership that requires reinvigoration and our redoubled efforts today.

It is highly encouraging that those vying to be the next president of Afghanistan, a few short weeks from now, are here with us today. It is expected that they will recognise and endorse the centrality of implementation of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework to Afghanistan's future, including sustained international assistance.

By this we will all send a clear, positive message of what our partnership and cooperation is based upon – what is best for Afghanistan and its people.