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The situation in Afghanistan

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The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 67/16 and Security Council resolution 2041 (2012), in which the Council requested me to report on developments in Afghanistan every three months.
2. The present report provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Afghanistan, including significant humanitarian, development and human rights efforts, since my previous report of 13 September 2012 (A/67/354-S/2012/703). It also provides a summary of key political and security developments and regional and international events relating to Afghanistan.

II. Relevant developments

A. Political developments

3. During the reporting period, much attention was focused on agreeing upon the systems and structures to implement and monitor the mutual commitments made at the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan, held on 8 July. Afghan and international stakeholders demonstrated a seriousness of intent to ensure momentum through the transition period and a solid foundation for the transformation decade of 2015-2024.
4. Elections, as the cornerstone of the country's political transition, continued to garner intense interest among Afghan stakeholders. In the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, the Government reiterated its commitment to credible and inclusive Afghan-led and Afghan-managed elections in accordance with the Constitution. How best to achieve this has been the subject of wide-ranging debate. On 17 September, the Council of Ministers rejected a proposal by the Independent



Election Commission for a new voter registration exercise to create voter lists specific to polling centres. An approach based on a national electronic identification card (known as “e-taskera”) by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, together with the Ministry of the Interior, was favoured instead. Given the long-term nature of this endeavour, the Commission was directed to simultaneously review previously distributed voter cards, fraud mitigation measures and the possibility of removing millions of duplicate cards as the basis of a voter list for the next round of polls. To better understand the necessary realignment of electoral planning and international support, amid widely varying cost and time estimates for the project, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) facilitated information-sharing sessions.

5. A law on the duties and structure of the Independent Election Commission was adopted by the Wolesi Jirga, the lower house of the National Assembly, on 24 September. It specified a comprehensive consultative process for appointments to the Commission, rather than the existing situation where the President has sole discretion. During last-minute deliberations, the Wolesi Jirga included the Electoral Complaints Commission as the final dispute resolution body, reconstituted as a permanent institution with provision for two international members appointed by the United Nations. On 20 November, the Meshrano Jirga, the upper house, passed the bill but removed the proposed appointments mechanism, leaving membership of electoral management bodies as the prerogative of the President, and rejected international membership of the Complaints Commission. A joint commission of the two houses must now find a compromise. On 20 October, the electoral law was brought to the Council of Ministers. Work continues, with public debate having focused on the role of political parties, the allocation of the seats constitutionally reserved for women, candidate eligibility, serial numbers on ballot papers, the role of security institutions and dispute-resolution mechanisms.

6. On 31 October, the Independent Election Commission presented its timeline for simultaneous presidential and Provincial Council elections. Polling day has been set for 5 April 2014. Some opposition figures and members of the National Assembly have expressed concern at the potential impact of winter weather on logistical preparations and voter turnout, in particular in northern and central areas. On the basis of this timing, the Commission developed a draft concept of operations, currently with the Office of the President, which includes an indicative budget and proposed strategies and activities to improve the conduct of the polls. On 31 October, the Commission also formally requested United Nations support for the 2014-2015 elections. That request triggered a two-phase needs assessment mission from Headquarters, with an initial visit taking place from 27 November to 5 December. Currently, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) electoral support project, ELECT II (Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow, second phase), provides electoral technical assistance to the Commission. Support was also extended during this period for an independent expert to provide technical advice to the Ministry of Justice in its work on the draft electoral law.

7. Political party activity gathered pace with realignments within and between groups in a rapidly changing environment. On 4 October, Afghan Millat, historically a predominantly Pashtun party, held its sixth party congress in Kabul, replacing its long-time leader and the Minister of Commerce, Anwar ul-Haq Ahady, with the party’s general secretary, Stana Gul Sherzad. The registered political wing emerging from the mujahideen-era Hizb-i Islami (Afghanistan) held its congress on 3 and

4 October in the capital, with the Minister of Economy, Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal, retaining the leadership. Both groups, together with the two major opposition blocs, the National Front of Afghanistan and the National Coalition of Afghanistan, were among 20 parties across the political spectrum that launched a “democracy charter” on 23 September. That charter demanded, among other things, that the Government should ensure a greater role for political parties in the electoral and political processes. More detailed demands for electoral reform were endorsed by more than 50 political parties and civil society organizations at a gathering organized by the major domestic observation body, the Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan, in Kabul on 17 October. On 3 November, the President, Hâmid Karzai, invited some 100 Afghan media managers and journalists for consultations on reporting in the lead-up to the elections. Participants welcomed the initiative amid recent debate over press freedom. Concerns were expressed about weaknesses in the legal framework on media issues, the difficulty in obtaining information from officials and threats against journalists.

8. The Wolesi Jirga endorsed three of four nominees proposed for senior Government security posts on 15 September. The former Minister of the Interior, Bismillah Khan Mohammadi, was confirmed as the Minister of Defence; a senior official of the Ministry of the Interior, Gen. Mujtaba Patang, was promoted to the rank of minister; and the former Minister of Tribal Affairs, Assadullah Khaled, was approved as Director General of the National Directorate of Security. The former Governor of Kabul, Haji Din Mohammad, did not garner the majority necessary for confirmation as Minister of Tribal Affairs. On 6 November, the national budget — with a shift to a new time frame for the fiscal year, now to begin on 21 December — was submitted to the Meshrano Jirga. In his presentation, the Minister of Finance, Omar Zakhilwal, stated that Afghanistan should not face an economic crisis beyond 2014, but emphasized the urgency of ensuring greater self-sufficiency, including by increasing domestic revenue. On 27 November, the budget was passed to the Wolesi Jirga with the advisory comments of the senators. The total proposed budget is \$7 billion (\$3.8 billion in the ordinary budget and \$3.3 billion in the development budget). On 7 November, the Wolesi Jirga rejected the fundamental Government policy proposed by the President as required under article 64 of the Constitution, citing a lack of clarity, and returned the submission with comments from its technical commissions.

9. Beginning on 19 September, a week of peace and national unity was marked by the High Peace Council with 195 related events throughout the country, including an international peace conference in Kabul on 22 September with representatives of 15 countries, together with diverse Afghan political, religious and civil society figures, exchanging views on the reconciliation process. From 12 to 14 November, the Chair of the Council, Salahuddin Rabbani, led a delegation on a visit to Islamabad at the invitation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, Hina Rabbani Khar. Council representatives met the President of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, the Prime Minister, Raja Pervez Ashraf, and the Chief of Army Staff, Gen. Ashfaq Kayani, and held positive exchanges on the need for long-term and consistent cooperation. A number of Taliban members in detention in Pakistan were released and, in a joint statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan and the High Peace Council agreed that requests for safe passage by potential negotiators would be considered in a positive way, appealed to the Taliban and armed opposition groups to sever ties with Al-Qaida and announced that a

conference of religious leaders would be convened to tackle the issue of rising militancy in the region. From 24 to 30 November, Mr. Rabbani visited Washington, D.C., and New York, where he held meetings, including with the Security Council and interested Member States, to discuss prospects for the peace process and how the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) could contribute further to that end.

10. UNAMA continued to provide analytical, advisory and technical support to the High Peace Council, including facilitating air transport for the visit to Islamabad. The Mission is also planning a track-two dialogue to encourage Afghan stakeholders to engage in an individual capacity, initially focusing on visions for the future. Together with UNDP, UNAMA also supports the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme, which is focused on lower-level fighters. According to its joint secretariat, a total of 5,814 former insurgents had joined by 14 November, 301 of whom had done so since September.

11. On 5 November, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) approved the listing of the Haqqani Network as an entity associated with the Taliban in constituting a threat to the peace, stability and security of Afghanistan. This follows the progressive listing of several of the group's top commanders and financial facilitators since 2007. The Committee cited the entity's involvement in a string of attacks on high-profile targets, including the Serena Hotel in 2008, the Intercontinental Hotel in June 2011, the Embassy of the United States of America and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) headquarters in September 2011 and multiple locations throughout Afghanistan in April 2012. On 21 November, Rahat Ltd., a hawala, or informal money transfer mechanism outside traditional banking systems that leaves no written record, was also listed, together with its owner. The Security Council is increasingly focused on the logistical infrastructure supporting insurgent activity and cited the participation of Rahat Ltd. in the financing and facilitation of the insurgency.

12. The phased transfer of security responsibility from international security forces to Afghan authorities continued, covering areas in which 75 per cent of the population resides. The distribution of districts in the final two tranches of the security transition is expected to be announced early in 2013. The President tasked a working group led by the Independent Directorate of Local Governance with developing a mechanism to transfer authority from provincial reconstruction teams. The Directorate requested relevant Member States to provide data on their activities to be presented to the Council of Ministers in January 2013. At a meeting of defence ministers of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization held in Brussels on 9 and 10 October, ISAF was directed to begin planning a post-2014 training mission. A visit by the North Atlantic Council to Kabul from 17 to 19 October reinforced commitments made at the summit held in Chicago, United States, in May that North Atlantic Treaty Organization forces would remain, albeit on a much-reduced scale, to provide support, provided that a legal status could be agreed upon with the Government of Afghanistan. On 15 November, the Governments of Afghanistan and the United States officially launched negotiations on a bilateral security agreement in line with their strategic partnership agreement.

B. Security developments

13. The United Nations continued to monitor security events relating to the work, mobility and safety of civilian actors. Security incident levels during the reporting period remained considerably lower than 2011 and were comparable to those of 2010. Unusually, there was significant insurgent activity towards the end of Ramadan, with a decline in line with seasonal trends thereafter. From 1 August to 31 October, 4,801 security incidents were recorded, a 14 per cent decrease compared to the same period in 2011 (5,582 incidents). The reduction is partly the result of successful interdiction by Afghan and international security forces of insurgent personnel, arms shipments and funding. It has not, however, necessarily resulted in public perceptions of improved security. The population suffers from the actions of illegal armed groups, tribal clashes and disputes over natural resources, while an insurgent campaign of intimidation and targeted killings of influential political, religious or tribal figures and community and women's activists continues unabated.

14. The south and east of the country continued to experience the vast majority of security incidents — 70 per cent from 1 August to 31 October — with an increasing insurgent focus seen on infiltration routes towards Kabul. Against the overall decrease, Kandahar, Kunar, Nangarhar, Logar and Wardak Provinces recorded notably higher security incident levels than in 2011. Uncharacteristically, the northern Province of Faryab also saw an increase, being the province with the sixth-highest number of incidents recorded during this period. Armed clashes and improvised explosive devices constituted the majority of incidents. The sustained efforts by insurgents to conduct spectacular events notwithstanding, suicide bombings remained fewer in number than in 2011, with 22 recorded from 1 August to 31 October, compared to 39 during the same quarter in 2011. The Afghan security forces reported thwarting attacks in Kabul, Kandahar, Kunduz, Parwan and Baghlan Provinces, with at least 17 potential suicide attackers arrested and large quantities of explosives seized. In a complex battlefield, reports continued of intra-insurgent clashes in Ghazni and Wardak Provinces, in addition to claims of localized popular uprisings against Taliban intimidation in Nuristan and Laghman Provinces.

15. Public demonstrations in September over French cartoons and a United States film derogatory to Islam were mostly peaceful and contained by Afghan security institutions, with three exceptions, including a protest in front of the UNAMA office in Bamyán, during which a guard was injured and a police vehicle damaged by stone throwing. The United Nations and implementing partners further came under direct and collateral threat through attacks on convoys in Faryab, Balkh, Herat, Ghor, Nimroz and Parwan Provinces, in addition to abductions of and threats to national staff in Balkh, Faryab, Herat, Farah, Badghis, Kandahar, Nangarhar, Kabul and Bamyán Provinces. On 18 October, a United Nations helicopter suffered damage from small arms fire when flying between Jalalabad and Gardez. The replacement of private security companies by the Afghan Public Protection Force has seen slow progress. On 31 October, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed that the United Nations, foreign missions and other international organizations enjoyed diplomatic immunity with the authority to maintain the internal security of their premises.

16. As at 31 October, the number of Afghan National Police personnel stood at 147,000 and Afghan National Army soldiers at 188,000. While surge targets for the end of 2012 (157,000 and 195,000, respectively) have largely been met, attrition has

remained high. Insider attacks targeting international and national personnel have also taken a toll on a strategy that is based on fast-paced, large-scale recruitment and dependent on mutual trust. A revetting exercise saw a few hundred personnel from all services dismissed. In ensuring a sustainable military force, concern has also been raised by Afghan and international stakeholders alike about the preparedness of the enablers required for operations and maintenance, such as air assets, engineers, counter-explosive expertise and casualty evacuation. Members of civil society continued to emphasize that there was a need for transparent accountability mechanisms.

17. On 16 and 17 October, the Minister of the Interior outlined his 10 priorities at a meeting of senior police personnel. Those included community-based policing, support for forces in areas that had undergone a security transition, reducing casualties and attrition, anti-corruption efforts and ensuring a sound organizational structure. On 10 November, a major reshuffle of 32 senior police officials was announced. Concerns over wrongdoing relating to the UNDP-administered Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan, which acts as a basket fund for police salaries, are being addressed through an active dialogue between UNDP and donors. The UNDP Office of Audit and Investigations is involved and a management review by independent consultants under way, to be finalized by the middle of December. Remedial measures already put in place include new oversight and compliance mechanisms and new standard operating procedures. UNAMA continued to facilitate the coordination of international resources to assist Afghan authorities in strengthening the recruitment and capacity of female police officers and to raise awareness among male officers of the importance of integrating women into the police force as equal members. On 15 October, the Ministry of the Interior, together with the Trust Fund, UNAMA and a consortium of women's non-governmental organizations, launched a police women mentoring programme, aimed at building the capacity of female police officers, addressing violence against women and raising awareness among male officers of the importance of integrating women into the police force as equal members.

18. The expansion of the Afghan Local Police continued amid a revetting process, with 17,850 personnel serving at 86 validated sites as at 14 November. Afghan security institutions have been assuming an increasing role in the training and oversight previously undertaken by international forces. While the Afghan Local Police has contributed to security in some areas, major concerns remain over vetting, command and control, impunity and the potential re-emergence of ethnically or politically biased militias. On 31 October, at a gathering of hundreds of former mujahideen in Herat Province, the Minister of Water and Energy, Mohammad Ismail Khan, promoted the creation of a national mujahideen council with units of former fighters to assist the country's security forces beyond 2014. The spokesperson of the Governor later expressed concern, emphasizing that control of security was a State function. In both houses of the legislature, there was also strong criticism of what was perceived as a potentially destabilizing attempt to create parallel structures.

C. Regional cooperation

19. The implementation of confidence-building measures outlined in the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan continued. On 24 September, the deputy ministers for foreign affairs of Afghanistan

and Kazakhstan co-chaired a meeting of senior officials in New York, at which the participants reviewed progress towards implementation plans on three of the seven agreed measures: counter-terrorism, disaster management and cooperation between chambers of commerce. At a second senior officials meeting, held in Ankara on 18 October, the participants agreed that all confidence-building measures would have implementation plans prepared by the time of the next meeting, scheduled for January 2013 in Baku, with those attending empowered to endorse them.

20. On 25 September, the ministers for foreign affairs of Afghanistan and Pakistan met in New York to discuss progress on the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement and the issue of cross-border infiltration and shelling. At a trilateral meeting the following day, the Presidents of Afghanistan and Pakistan and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, David Cameron, agreed to finalize a draft strategic cooperation agreement between Afghanistan and Pakistan by the end of 2013. On 20 November, the Chief of Army Staff of Pakistan, Gen. Kayani, made a one-day visit to Kabul, meeting the President and national and international military counterparts.

21. On 22 September, the President met the top security official of China, Zhou Yongkang, the highest-level representative of China to visit Afghanistan since 1966. Further extending Afghanistan's engagement in the region, on 16 October, the President participated in the twelfth Economic Cooperation Organization summit meeting of Heads of State and/or Government of the States members of the Economic Cooperation Organization, held in Baku, and the next day took part in the Asia Cooperation Dialogue, inaugurated in 2002 to help to integrate regional cooperation organizations. On 8 November, he addressed the fifth Bali Democracy Forum. On 9 November, he and the President of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, signed a number of friendship documents to enhance trade and cultural cooperation. From 9 to 13 November, he undertook an official visit to India, meeting the President, Pranab Mukherjee, and the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh. Four pacts were signed to increase cooperation on local government and community organizations, agriculture, youth affairs and the development of coal and mineral resources.

22. On 19 September, Lithuania hosted an international conference on the theme "Afghanistan and the region: practical approach for sustainable development". It was attended by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan and his Lithuanian counterpart, Audronius Azubalis. On 18 October, the fourth annual meeting of Central Asian deputy ministers for foreign affairs was held in Bishkek under the auspices of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia. On 19 October, the International Contact Group on Afghanistan met in Ankara. Discussion focused on the implementation of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, the Istanbul Process, counter-narcotics and support for electoral and reconciliation processes. The Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan strongly linked counter-narcotics and support for electoral and reconciliation processes in his address. On 14 and 15 November, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific held a conference in Mazar-e-Sharif on strengthening economic ties between Afghanistan and Central Asia. The Governor of Balkh Province, local officials, business representatives and parliamentarians attended, together with the United Nations Resident Coordinator for Tajikistan, the Ambassador of Tajikistan to Afghanistan and participants from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and UNAMA. The conference was followed on 27 and 28 November by the 2012 Economic Forum of the United Nations Special Programme for the

Economies of Central Asia, held in Bangkok, which included a side event to review work on Afghanistan.

23. My Special Representative, Ján Kubiš, continued to focus on regional engagement with official travel to the Russian Federation, Turkey, Turkmenistan and the United Arab Emirates. In Moscow, on 14 November, he participated in a consultation on regional security with States members and observers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. It was agreed that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and UNAMA would deepen contacts and help to ensure the peaceful and stable development of Afghanistan. On 9 and 10 October, my Deputy Special Representative for UNAMA, Nicholas Haysom, visited Tehran, where he met senior Iranian officials and discussed the need for robust regional engagement, including on national security, immigration, refugees and drug control.

III. Human rights

24. From 1 August to 31 October, civilian casualties increased by 28 per cent compared to the same quarter in 2011, in contrast to the downward trend of the first six months of 2012. Overall, in the first 10 months of 2012, a 4 per cent decline in civilian deaths and injuries was recorded compared with the same period in 2011. UNAMA documented 2,557 civilian casualties (967 deaths and 1,590 wounded) from 1 August to 31 October. The vast majority (84 per cent, up from 70 per cent for the same period in 2011) were attributed to anti-Government elements. Pro-Government forces bore responsibility for 6 per cent of civilian casualties, down from 10 per cent the previous year. Another 10 per cent of casualties could not be attributed to any party.

25. Improvised explosive devices continued to be the leading cause of civilian casualties, which, together with suicide attacks, accounted for 56 per cent of deaths and injuries from 1 August to 31 October. In a mass casualty incident on 19 October, a civilian bus hit a pressure-plate-activated device, killing 18 women in Balkh Province. In a statement issued on 24 October on the occasion of Eid al-Adha, purportedly by the Taliban leader, Mullah Omar, the need to protect non-combatants was emphasized. Nevertheless, civilians continued to be deliberately targeted and public locations used as sites for insurgent attacks. Civilian casualties as a result of targeted killings by anti-Government elements increased by 93 per cent compared to the same quarter in 2011, with 256 civilians killed and 145 injured. On 26 October, a suicide bomber detonated in a mosque during Eid prayers, killing 41 persons, including civilians, in Maymana, Faryab Province.

26. More than 355 children (including at least 67 girls) were killed or injured in the armed conflict from 1 August to 31 October, most in the south and east. These figures include an incident on 4 October in which an explosive device detonated at the gate of a high school in Chaghcharan, Ghor Province, wounding one pupil as staff and students celebrated Teachers' Day. Other grave violations of child rights recorded included attacks against education and health facilities (27 incidents), abductions (5 incidents), underage recruitment (4 incidents) and denial of humanitarian assistance (11 incidents). Arson attacks on girls' schools were reported in Badakhshan, Khost, Nangarhar and Bamyán Provinces.

27. Reports of serious violence against women and harmful traditional practices continued. Tasked by the President, the Ministry of Women's Affairs launched an

awareness campaign to reduce violence against women, with the support of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and UNAMA. The Entity also supported the Ministry in running a shelter programme for women survivors of violence and in developing standard operating procedures for shelter management so as to ensure high-quality services and protocols to protect those seeking assistance. The aim is to establish 29 shelters by the end of 2013. At a meeting of the Women's Commission of the Wolesi Jirga, held on 16 September, the ministers of justice and women's affairs and the Deputy Minister of the Interior made strong statements in which they condemned the imprisonment of women and girls on charges of "running away", given that no such crime existed under Afghan law. Specific legal and policy actions have yet to ensure that the practice is prevented. On 11 October, the International Day of the Girl Child focused attention on raising awareness of the continuing practice of early marriage in Afghanistan. According to the Afghanistan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2010/11, published in June 2012, more than 46 per cent of women are married before the age of 18 years and more than 15 per cent before the age of 15 years, the fact that the minimum age for marriage in Afghanistan is 16 years notwithstanding.

28. ISAF has been reviewing certification allowing the transfer of detainees from international forces to several facilities run by the National Directorate of Security and the Afghan National Police. This action was taken as the result of new information that it received on the use of torture in some Afghan-run detention facilities to which ISAF detainees had been transferred. As part of an earlier review of the Directorate's facility in Takhar, and following renewed reports of torture, ISAF revoked certification. UNAMA continued its own efforts to observe the treatment of conflict-related detainees, visiting 36 facilities managed by the Directorate, the Ministry of the Interior, the Afghan National Police and the Ministry of Justice in 16 provinces.

29. The President stated that decisions on the membership of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, awaited since December 2011, were forthcoming. Members of civil society have expressed concern at a lack of transparency in decision-making. UNAMA has advocated a robust, inclusive process and well-qualified appointees.

IV. Implementation of the Kabul process and aid coherence

30. To make the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework operational, the Government took the lead in preparing detailed action plans for indicators, finalizing the aid management policy and clarifying the aid architecture necessary for coherent engagement with the international community. On 3 September, the Council of Ministers approved a structure proposed by the Ministry of Finance. The Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, co-chaired by the Government of Afghanistan and UNAMA, remains the umbrella for broad-based engagement between the Government and the international community. More specifically focused on the Tokyo Framework, a new steering committee chaired by the Minister of Finance will convene at the ministerial and ambassadorial levels to promote mutual dialogue at the strategic level. This will be supported by a technical committee of deputy ministers and heads of donor agencies, focused on progress towards individual benchmarks.

31. Intense engagement by UNAMA in defining the new structures facilitated agreement on the representation of the international community on the two committees. The five leading donors — on the basis of data held by the Ministry of Finance and reviewed yearly — will have seats. For 2012, those donors are the United States, Japan, the European Union, the United Kingdom and Germany. In addition, up to four donor representatives will be selected on an ad hoc basis, according to the agenda, policy capacity to contribute and the principle of representation. For the first round of meetings, those donors are Australia, Canada and a representative of the Nordic Group.

32. On 15 October, the Government provided the first iteration of action plans for two of the five Tokyo Framework areas: representational democracy and equitable elections; and governance, rule of law and human rights. They were the focus of the first technical committee meeting, on 21 November, and steering committee meeting, on 5 December. International commitments to alignment against national priority programmes (80 per cent of funding) and on-budget execution (50 per cent of funding), together with implementation of the aid management policy, have been the subject of complex discussions. Consultations also continued on the 6 national priority programmes (of 22) still to be endorsed: transparency and accountability; law and justice for all; water and natural resources; efficient and effective governance; comprehensive agriculture production; and national energy supply. The four last-mentioned programmes are in the final stages of consultation.

33. On 17 October, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator that a one-year extension of the current United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2010-2013 had been approved. The time frame of the next United Nations Development Assistance Framework will begin in 2015, in line with the Government's transformation decade of 2015-2024. On 14 and 15 November, the Associate Administrator of UNDP, Rebeca Grynspan, was in Kabul and engaged with Government counterparts, the United Nations country team and the donor community on current efforts and the post-2014 agenda. She signed an agreement with the Ministry of Women's Affairs for UNDP to undertake a major project focusing on capacity development for the Ministry and Afghan women's legal and economic empowerment.

V. Governance and rule of law

34. On 20 September, the President announced a large-scale reshuffle of provincial leadership following an assessment by the Independent Directorate for Local Governance. The governors of Takhar, Helmand, Baghlan, Faryab, Wardak, Logar, Badghis, Nimroz and Laghman Provinces were replaced.

35. On 28 November, the Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee released the findings of its public inquiry into the failure of Kabul Bank. It concluded that individuals had capitalized on a policy vacuum to divert nearly \$1 billion. Recommendations included greater coordination between regulatory bodies in the financial sector and tackling systemic issues such as abuse of power, political interference and impunity. This inquiry, undertaken at the request of the Ministry of Finance, is not part of a criminal investigation.

36. On 13 October, the Wolesi Jirga adopted a law on the structure, duties and authority of the Office of the Attorney General. Discussion on the draft Criminal

Procedure Code also began in the Judicial Affairs Commission of the Wolesi Jirga. Donor dissatisfaction at the continued failure to finalize the national priority programme on law and justice for all has seen the European Union publicly indicate that it will put on hold its future funding for the sector until the programme has been endorsed. The complexity and scope of the programme present challenges and UNAMA has been coordinating between the Government and donors with the goal of endorsement early in 2013.

37. UNAMA and UNDP have continued their close collaboration as the United Nations global focal points on the rule of law. They have assisted the Government to identify priority rule of law and gender issues and to coordinate policy and programming to better empower women as active participants in civil society and government. There has also been engagement at the provincial level to assist authorities in coordinating alternate donor funding for activities relating to corrections and the rule of law.

VI. Development and humanitarian assistance

38. Recent data indicate that food security improved considerably in most provinces, with increased rainfall contributing to high cereal production (forecast to reach 6.3 million tons for 2012). Nevertheless, food insecurity and malnutrition remained high for some 650,000 persons, in particular in Nuristan and Badakhshan Provinces, where significant food consumption gaps and high malnutrition were reported. The onset of winter is likely to further compound the situation, with populations in 13 provinces projected to face extreme winter risk in informal urban settlements and remote rural locations. The Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority, with United Nations agencies and other humanitarian actors, has been working to ensure adequate preparedness with a particular focus on preventing the avoidable deaths of children. Mapping of the most vulnerable populations is under way and the World Food Programme has pre-positioned 10,000 tons of food at the household level to help to ensure that vulnerable families have adequate stocks.

39. As at 31 October, 459,200 people (71,800 families) had been assessed as internally displaced by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The impact of displacement is experienced nationwide: 30 per cent of those displaced are hosted in the south, 26 per cent in the west and 21 per cent in the east. Conflict continues to be a significant driver, with 35 per cent of those newly displaced in 2012 (58,600 persons) citing conflict as the primary direct motivation for their flight. Many were displaced within the western areas, which saw the highest increase in internal displacement (14,110 persons). At least 5,000 Afghans (800 families) were displaced and in need of humanitarian assistance in Kunar Province during 2012.

40. On 3 October, the first meeting of the Quadripartite Steering Committee for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries was held in Geneva. UNHCR and the Governments of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan discussed ways to ensure the effective implementation of the three pillars of the Solutions Strategy: continued support to voluntary repatriation, investment in sustainable reintegration in Afghanistan and assistance to host countries. Related

consultations in Geneva involving key stakeholders resulted in expressions of strong support for the multidimensional approach of the Solutions Strategy, which seeks to improve the lives of returnees, almost one quarter of the overall population of Afghanistan, while simultaneously providing appropriate support to the neighbouring countries who continue to extend protection to many Afghan refugees. In addition, UNHCR facilitated meetings of the tripartite commissions — in September with Afghanistan and Pakistan, and in December with Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran — to address the strategic and operational aspects of voluntary return and the continuing status of refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan.

41. On 27 September, at a high-level event in New York entitled “Our commitment to the next generation: the legacy of a polio-free world”, the President stated that his Government would make every effort possible with the resources available to eradicate polio in Afghanistan. The event brought together leaders of the remaining polio-endemic countries, donors, development partners and the media to draw attention to the need to eliminate the outstanding polio cases worldwide. On 29 September, the Ministry of Public Health, together with the World Health Organization, launched the National Health and Nutrition Policy 2012-2020, setting out priorities to better ensure the long-term sustainability of service provision. As part of the Secretary-General’s Every Woman Every Child Initiative, a report on Afghan midwifery was finalized on 31 October. Detailing the current status of midwifery knowledge around the country, it will be used to plan training and deployment of resources. On 12 November, the Government and its development partners endorsed the country’s first education joint sector review. The Human Resource Development Board, an interministerial coordination body for the education sector, was supported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in conducting the exercise. It found that technical capacity and possibilities for domestic resource mobilization to meet the challenges remained fragile.

42. New data from the World Health Organization revealed that, during the first 10 months of 2012, 540 health facilities had been forced to suspend activities owing to insecurity or lack of funding, an increase of 40 per cent compared to the same period in 2011. This equates to more than 20 per cent of the 2,600 facilities providing various types of health care in the country, with the largest number of inactive facilities located in the south, where between 50 and 60 per cent of the population has very limited or no access to basic health-care services.

43. At their twelfth meeting, held in Geneva from 3 to 7 December, the States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction endorsed an extension for Afghanistan to meet its obligations under the Convention. Currently, 670,000 Afghans live within 500 metres of a minefield, affecting more than 1,800 communities. The goal is for Afghanistan to be declared mine-impact-free by 2023, which would be a significant achievement for what has been one of the world’s most heavily mine-contaminated countries.

44. Risks associated with the delivery of humanitarian services remained high. Continuing military operations, remnants of war and sporadic clashes continued to negatively affect the protection of civilians and the ability of humanitarians to safely gain access and provide assistance to vulnerable populations.

VII. Counter-narcotics

45. In the 2011 Survey of Commercial Cannabis Cultivation and Production, released during the reporting period, it was estimated that the total area under cannabis cultivation in Afghanistan in 2011 was 12,000 ha, with a potential yield of 1,300 tons. An estimated 65,000 households grew cannabis, up from 47,000 in 2010. Joint research by the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) indicated a clear geographical association between opium and cannabis cultivation, with almost two thirds of cannabis-growing households (58 per cent) reporting poppy cultivation in the preceding season. Three quarters of farmers stated that they grew cannabis because of high sales prices, with the value of the highest-quality resin nearly tripling, increasing from \$35 per kg in 2009 to \$95 per kg in 2011.

46. Opium cultivation rose by 18 per cent in 2012, although plant disease led to a decrease in final production. The joint Opium Survey 2012, carried out by the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics and UNODC and released in November, recorded a jump in cultivation from 131,000 ha in 2011 to around 153,000 ha in 2012. The number of poppy-free provinces remained stable year-on-year at 17. A disease that affected poppy plants mitigated the increase in cultivation. The final figures showed a decrease of 38 per cent in production compared to 2011, from 5,800 tons to 3,600 tons. The gross average income produced per hectare was assessed at \$4,600, with an overall total farm-gate value of \$700 million, or 4 per cent of the Afghan gross domestic product.

47. Under the auspices of the UNODC Regional Programme for Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries, the first border liaison office meeting between Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran was held in Tayabad, Islamic Republic of Iran, on 24 September. On 27 and 28 September, a workshop on strengthening the coordination and quality of counter-narcotics training programmes was held in Ashgabat, with another in Almaty on 3 and 4 October. On 10 and 11 October, the first regional workshop on international cooperation in asset recovery for countries in West and Central Asia was co-organized in Tehran with the Economic Cooperation Organization. On 17 October, the second tripartite meeting of senior officials from Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, held in Bishkek, saw agreement on improving legal frameworks, supporting the establishment of border liaison offices, conducting joint operations and employing the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre as a communications hub.

48. A regional ministerial conference aimed at strengthening cooperation on counter-narcotics efforts was held in Islamabad on 12 and 13 November. New measures proposed included a hotline between national narcotics agencies and a regional contact group to meet annually at the senior official level.

VIII. Mission support

49. UNAMA made progress in reconfiguring the Mission to best meet its mandate in the current and anticipated political, security and financial environment. This effort has been guided by the outcomes of the comprehensive review conducted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1974 (2011), the subsequent renewal of the

mandate by the Council in its resolution 2041 (2012) and funding levels approved for special political missions by the General Assembly in its resolution 66/248.

50. The final five of the nine UNAMA provincial offices slated for closure — Daykundi, Uruzgan, Takhar, Saripul and Kunar — ceased operations. The premises in Uruzgan were transferred to the United Nations Office for Project Services, while the office in Kunar was returned to the Afghan authorities for use by the local university. National outreach and regular travel throughout the country has been the focus of renewed emphasis given the lighter provincial footprint, with my Special Representative visiting Nangarhar, Bamyan, Herat and Faryab Provinces. The closure of offices, with the resulting termination of contracts, and a restriction on recruitment before a foreseen reduction in posts for 2013 have led to an exceptionally high vacancy rate.

51. Progress has continued in ensuring that all United Nations facilities meet safety standards. The construction of new premises in Balkh and Bamyan Provinces is now complete and relocation from older sites in progress. Delays in clearing protective security equipment through Customs and charges by the Ministry of Communications for processing communications equipment continued to affect the Mission's ability to carry out its activities in a timely manner. Flight capacity has been disrupted owing to the small arms fire against a United Nations aircraft, in addition to a hard landing by a helicopter in Bamyan on 14 October, which resulted in severe damage. On 10 October, the President issued a decree in which he ordered that UNDP should relocate its long-time headquarters in Kabul, leading to a need to identify and secure appropriate new premises.

IX. Observations

52. I welcome the seriousness with which the Government of Afghanistan and the international community have approached the operationalization of the commitments made at the Tokyo Conference, which are critical to continuing to provide the necessary levels of civilian assistance to the country. Extensive follow-up in Kabul is ensuring that the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework is at the heart of future engagement, promoting greater development coherence and consistency in expectations and priorities. I congratulate the Government on its leadership in realigning the necessary aid architecture and am pleased that UNAMA has continued to demonstrate its value as a facilitating partner.

53. Donors have emphasized that consolidating and extending the gains made in the promotion of human rights over the past decade, notably the rights of women and girls, are central to their sustained engagement. Mainstreaming gender issues across the Framework's action plans and national priority programmes, in addition to ensuring appropriate attention to another cross-cutting issue, counter-narcotics, remains key to underpinning the sustainability of development and governance reforms. Donors have also strongly emphasized that there is a need for demonstrable progress on agreed governance measures. It is important to bear in mind that the concept of mutual accountability demands that the international community, in turn, ensure greater progress with regard to its long-standing commitments to alignment and on-budget financing.

54. The publication of a comprehensive timeline for the presidential and Provincial Council polls to take place in 2014 is a positive step. The Tokyo Mutual

Accountability Framework indicators now require a robust electoral architecture, developed transparently. This should include the passage of the two outstanding electoral laws, with debate leading to consensus on processes that enhance the credibility, inclusiveness and sustainability of elections. Strong Afghan leadership will also be required to coordinate and drive the “e-taskera” effort across the many relevant institutions, if this important national project is to contribute to the 2014-2015 electoral cycle. I welcome the constructive participation of political parties and civil society. Realistic recommendations on electoral reforms and well-informed discussion promote transparency and inclusiveness and must inform decision-making. The media also has an important role in facilitating wider dialogue and reflecting the issues of the day.

55. The increasingly practical focus of the Istanbul Process, especially the progress in translating confidence-building measures into implementation plans, is welcome and should yield tangible results. I commend the active engagement of those Member States, supporter countries and regional organizations that are participating in this important work and pledge the continued cooperation and support of the United Nations. The proliferation of bilateral and multilateral engagement by regional actors on common concerns is also a positive development.

56. The visit by the High Peace Council to Islamabad in November brought renewed momentum to strengthening relations between the neighbours. Long-term, consistent engagement is vital to building a shared understanding and, ultimately, mutual solutions. As recognized in the joint statement issued by the High Peace Council and the Government of Pakistan, engagement with the religious establishment can help to tackle a rising tide of militancy. The Council has an important role in Afghan-led efforts to build the conditions and confidence conducive to peace and reconciliation, and the United Nations is prepared to offer assistance, as requested. I am pleased that the Government has indicated its support for the intention of UNAMA to structure a complementary track-two national dialogue.

57. A rise in civilian casualties during the reporting period is of great concern, given that the conflict continues to take an unacceptable toll on the Afghan people. Insurgents are intimidating communities and individuals as a deliberate tactic to extend influence and control, targeting those who challenge their authority or ideas. The targeting of civilians violates both religious strictures and international law. In particular, pressure-plate-activated improvised explosive devices, acting as massive anti-personnel landmines, are a prohibited weapon under international law. I reiterate demands for an immediate halt to their use and call upon insurgent leaders to publicly repudiate such tactics. While public statements linked to the Taliban have challenged United Nations data on these issues, I stand by our information and our use of clear legal definitions of civilians. Nevertheless, I also welcome continued engagement with all parties to build understanding and identify solutions to combat this human tragedy.

58. As international military forces reduce their presence, there will be economic consequences. It will therefore be vital for efforts to create sustainable employment and livelihood opportunities to be redoubled. Increased Government leadership in helping to ensure an orderly transfer is critical. The United Nations will, where requested, support the smooth transition of tasks to national authorities to minimize potentially negative impacts. While the challenges should not be downplayed, the

transition may also provide an opportunity to rebalance assistance, ensuring that it is focused on needs and aligned with agreed national objectives.

59. Overall humanitarian funding has decreased from \$900 million in 2011 to \$484 million in 2012 (nearly 50 per cent), while overall development assistance has grown from \$4 billion in 2010 to \$6.3 billion in 2012. I support the call by the humanitarian country team in Afghanistan for donors to earmark at least 10 per cent of their official development assistance for humanitarian assistance. A common humanitarian action plan for Afghanistan for 2013, outlining the most acute humanitarian needs and priority life-saving interventions, is expected to be launched in December. It will provide an opportunity to tackle this imbalance and to support the overarching humanitarian objective for 2013 of reinforcing the protection of civilians by responding more effectively to conflict-related needs.

60. My Deputy Special Representative, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, Michael Keating, completed his assignment on 10 November. I thank him for his drive and diplomacy in facilitating the work of UNAMA and the United Nations country team, in particular around the successful Tokyo process negotiations. His replacement, Mark Bowden, arrived in Kabul on 15 November. I wish him well in this new and challenging assignment. In addition, I should like, once again, to express my gratitude to all national and international United Nations staff members in Afghanistan and to my Special Representative, Ján Kubiš, for their continued dedication to supporting the people of Afghanistan.
