



Security Council

Sixty-seventh year

6735th meeting

Tuesday, 20 March 2012, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

| | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| <i>President:</i> | Sir Mark Lyall Grant | (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) |
| <i>Members:</i> | Azerbaijan | Mr. Mehdiyev |
| | China | Mr. Li Baodong |
| | Colombia | Mr. Osorio |
| | France | Mr. Araud |
| | Germany | Mr. Wittig |
| | Guatemala | Mr. Rosenthal |
| | India | Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri |
| | Morocco | Mr. Loulichki |
| | Pakistan | Mr. Tarar |
| | Portugal | Mr. Cabral |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Churkin |
| | South Africa | Mr. Sangqu |
| | Togo | Mr. Menan |
| | United States of America | Mrs. DiCarlo |

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2012/133)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

12-26920 (E)



Please recycle 



The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2012/133)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Security Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, Australia, Canada, Finland, Japan, Norway and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jan Kubiš, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2012/133, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

I now give the floor to Mr. Kubiš.

Mr. Kubiš: I am very honoured to brief the Security Council for the first time in my new capacity as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Allow me to give the Council some impressions and findings based on the first two months of my work in that new capacity.

First of all, 10 years after the creation of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, we face a set of ground realities that is very different from those we found at the beginning. The international military presence is gradually transferring full security responsibility in Afghanistan to the Afghan National

Security Forces and will finish its current mission by the end of 2014. Efforts continue to make institutions of national and sub-national governance increasingly capable of providing governance, the rule of law, development and social services to the population, in order to ensure their fundamental rights and freedoms. Voices in support of Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation are stronger, both from the various parts of Afghan society and from the region.

The profile and work of the United Nations in Afghanistan must reflect those realities and take full account of the principles and requirements of the transition process. Active support of those positive trends and developments, in partnership with Afghan authorities and society, must be at the very core of the way we work.

During the first two months of my work in Afghanistan, I met Government officials, political leaders and civil society actors in Kabul and the provinces and across the region. Starting with President Karzai, each and every individual offered me a warm welcome. If there was one thing I drew hope from, it was the strong expressions of the desire for peace. The message of the people is clear — it is time to wind down this war.

News about the nascent peace process has prompted a lively debate that needs to be harnessed and fed into constructive policymaking. Under the People's Dialogue supported by UNAMA, Afghans across the country share their vision of and road map for a peace process. The Dialogue also revealed that corruption, lack of justice and abuse of authority are seen by many as the biggest problem facing ordinary people, coupled with a lack of work prospects for the growing urban population of young people.

Another important point I drew from my meetings was a near universal recognition of the value of the United Nations work and a great desire for UNAMA's continued presence.

Finally, I need to mention the recent tragedies that marked my first weeks in Afghanistan. I again offer my condolences and sympathies to the families of all casualties of the recent instances of violence, be it civilian or military. And I applaud the commitment to full accountability.

At the same time, I passionately emphasize the need for non-violent means of protest, even in response

to such grave, albeit unintentional mistakes as the recent burning of the Holy Quran. I commend the appeals and actions of the majority of religious leaders and community elders, who ensured that deep anger was expressed at peaceful community gatherings. And I condemn the sermons and appeals of those few who called for violence. They have only brought death and destruction, first and foremost to Afghans.

A series of killings also targeted international troops there to help and train Afghan forces and institutions. This is unacceptable. Such malicious acts have potentially profound implications for these essential efforts, for public support and for the enduring commitment of the international community to assisting Afghanistan and its people.

The United Nations has also been singled out for violence by some. Notably, the UNAMA office in Kunduz was directly attacked, which brought back frightening memories of the seven dear colleagues of ours killed a year ago in similar circumstances in Mazar-e Sharif. The timely actions of the Afghan National Security Forces ensured that no United Nations personnel were hurt, but six persons lost their lives. We regret these losses.

In response, international staff members have been temporarily relocated while security is reassessed. This may have an impact on some programmes in the short term, and local leaders have already issued statements appealing for their return. However, the security of all our staff, national and international, is of critical importance. We continue to work with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and increasingly with the Afghan authorities, to address this. I expect, and indeed request, the support and understanding of the Afghan authorities for our security requirements. They are sine qua non for our continuous work and presence in the country.

Regardless of those recent tragedies, let us not lose perspective. Recent events should not eclipse or overshadow positive trends and developments or push the international community, Afghanistan or the transition process off agreed plans and timetables. The transition so far has been on track and on target, and the Afghan National Security Forces have so far proven that they are up to their tasks. The Chicago summit should firm up these developments and plans by reaching specific and solid commitments. The absence of such commitments would be a setback to the

transition and stability in Afghanistan and the region. In looking to the future, we must demonstrate that we have learned from our mistakes of the past.

Transition, however, also encompasses accelerated Afghan leadership, responsibility and accountability in governance, the rule of law, justice, economic development and combating corruption and poverty, to name but a few. Stronger efforts in combating drug production and trafficking are critically important, given the increase in poppy cultivation and opium production and the consequent increased threat to security, stability, development and governance in Afghanistan and the region. Security gains must be supported by progress in these areas to make them and the transition sustainable.

Last year's international conference in Bonn saw commitment to enduring partnership also during the transformation decade beyond the 2014. Mutual commitments need to be respected by both the international community and Afghanistan. The challenge now is to translate political commitments into predictable funding for the national priority programmes, and to define a follow up mechanism for mutual accountability between Government and its partners for the coming decade. Tokyo will provide that opportunity. In the coming months, the Government and its international partners must intensify their engagement to ensure that properly sequenced national priority programmes serve as the basis for strategic public and private funding and the achievement of development outcomes identified by the Government as fundamental to self-reliance.

Long-term support and predictability are further enhanced by a number of comprehensive partnership agreements between Afghanistan and its bilateral partners. This process continues. UNAMA is working consistently for coherent approaches on the part of the international community in support of Afghanistan's development and governance challenges, including as co-chair of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board.

Many of my Afghan interlocutors have placed emphasis on the 2014 presidential polls. Already the focus of intense debate and political mobilization, the leadership change coincides with the planned culmination of the security transfer. Elections are an Afghan process to be managed by independent Afghan electoral management bodies. If the results are to be

trusted, the majority of my Afghan partners gave me a clear message — there is a need to strengthen and improve Afghanistan's electoral process, including electoral reform, in order to increase its sustainability, integrity, transparency and inclusiveness. A United Nations supporting role, at the request of the Afghan authorities, is welcome and, indeed, needed.

The value of UNAMA's human rights work has been repeatedly emphasized to me by all parties. As confirmed by UNAMA's impartial tracking and verification of civilian casualties, 2011 was the fifth year in a row that civilian deaths rose. Insurgent tactics of suicide attacks and the use of victim-activated pressure-plate improvised explosive devices account for the majority of this toll. This is unacceptable and contradicts even the publicly declared ban on land mines by anti-Government forces.

Improvements in the condition of Afghan detention centres and a reduction in the torture and mistreatment of detainees are another concrete outcome of our efforts. Both ISAF and Afghan authorities have undertaken measures to address abusive practices in Afghan detention facilities. It is important to build on gains made to date.

In spite of legal and constitutional protections for women, violence against women and girls remains pervasive in Afghanistan. Improvements require the enforcement of laws — notably the law on the elimination of violence against women — that criminalize and penalize violence and harmful practices against women and girls. UNAMA will continue to work to improve protection and to promote the rights of Afghan women, including their participation in public life and peace and reconciliation processes and with regard to equal opportunities in education and employment. Similarly, we will continue our work for the benefit of Afghan children.

Recent months have seen some potentially positive developments in support of peace and reconciliation. To turn that potential into a successful process, efforts must first of all be fully Afghan-led, but also comprehensive and genuinely inclusive and involve representatives of all relevant forces and segments of Afghan society. At the same time, peace should not be achieved at the expense of the basic achievements of the past decade, as confirmed by the Kabul communiqué and the Bonn Conference. In

moving towards a peace process, reducing civilian deaths and injuries should be of the highest priority.

A much repeated request has been for UNAMA to continue to support the High Peace Council and generally make use of its good offices and services in support of peace and reconciliation. Many have called for a United Nations role in those nascent processes, and there are different ideas on what form and shape that could take and when.

Support for Afghanistan in the region has gained momentum, as reflected, among other similar efforts, by the recently held trilateral summit at Islamabad between the leaders of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, who spoke in favour of an Afghan-led peace process. I have been particularly impressed with the Afghan leadership of the regionally owned Istanbul process, as well as with how the process is progressing. I also welcome the commitment of the supporting countries. The work currently focuses on seven specific confidence-building measures and on preparations for the Kabul ministerial meeting in June, which will be preceded next week by an important meeting in Dushanbe of the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan.

My recent visits to Pakistan, Turkmenistan, India and Iran provided invaluable opportunities for an exchange of views on the support of those countries for Afghanistan and UNAMA. We spoke about opportunities, but I also heard words of strong concern. I would like to thank those countries for the valuable meetings and for their hospitality.

One of my top priorities is to ensure greater coherence of United Nations efforts in all areas — pragmatic, operational and policy — and to ensure that our activities are outcome-oriented, transparent and cost-effective. My deputy, Mr. Michael Keating, is working with the entire United Nations system to ensure full United Nations alignment behind a national development strategy and the national priority programmes, which will serve as the basis for the United Nations pragmatic and operational coherence. As Humanitarian Coordinator, he is working with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to promote and provide practical support for an effective response to humanitarian needs, whether as a result of chronic vulnerability, disasters or conflict. Also, decades-long ongoing problems with regard to refugees and internally displaced persons should be addressed

on the basis of sustainable solutions that link humanitarian efforts with development.

From the beginning of my work in Kabul, I have been clear that the Mission and the 28 United Nations agencies, funds and programmes present in Afghanistan must work in support of increasing the capacity of Afghan authorities, institutions and systems to meet the needs of the Afghan people. That will also guide my work in the future.

The President: I thank Mr. Kubiš for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would also like to express a warm welcome to our good friend Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš, who today spoke for the first time in the Security Council. In a short period of time, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General has gained much confidence and admiration from the Afghan people. We look forward to continuing our close cooperation. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his comprehensive report (S/2012/133) on Afghanistan.

We meet today at a critical juncture in Afghanistan's history. It is a time in which the culmination of the efforts of my country and of the nations involved in the stabilization process in the past 10 years has reached a moment of truth. Today's debate falls within a series of important events that will shape the contours of the international community's work during the transition and beyond: from the Bonn Conference in December 2011 to the Tokyo ministerial conference next July. After a decade, today we are also looking into a new framework for the United Nations mandate and work, in a situation characterized by transition, followed by the transformation decade.

The transition process, which started with the transfer of responsibilities to Afghan security forces a year ago, is continuing apace. With the second tranche completed, we are nearing the launch of the third phase of transition, at the conclusion of which the majority of Afghan territory will come under full Afghan security control. By end of the transition in 2014, Afghanistan

will assume full responsibility for security and ownership and leadership of governance and development. A paradigm shift is under way. The aim is sovereignty and empowering Afghanistan to take charge of its own destiny and turn the direct military and civilian function of the international community into a support and enabling role.

A successful transition requires 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 to 2024. That is what we, Afghanistan and the international community, set out to do last December at Bonn. That commitment will be supported concretely in July in Tokyo.

At this stage, we hope that the assistance of the international community, as manifested in the commitments of the Kabul Conference in 2010 and the Bonn Conference in 2011, will help to meet the requisite needs of our security forces. That is crucial for the building up, training and equipping of our national security forces, which have proved themselves in recent weeks to be increasingly capable of protecting their fellow Afghans. Furthermore, the transition dividend, channelled into Afghanistan's political stability, economic growth and social advancement, will have a direct effect on fostering sustainable peace in the country, and bring about real change in the lives of people.

In the long term, what matters is the establishment and strengthening of an enduring strategic partnership that will provide us with a solid base of mutual cooperation. Thus far, we have signed or are negotiating long-term strategic partnerships with our international partners, including those in the region. In that connection, Afghanistan and the United States are working to finalize all parts of the strategic partnership agreement, which will ensure our combined commitment to the future of a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. On 9 March we signed a memorandum of understanding with the United States on the handover of control of the Parwan Detention Facility to the Afghan Government, and we are working to finalize another memorandum relating to special operations in the very near future.

An effective transition is also contingent upon the successful outcome of the Afghan-led peace and

reconciliation, outreach and reintegration process. The dynamics of the peace talks shifted with the announcement of the opening of the Taliban office in Qatar, which we believe will provide fresh impetus to our peace efforts. We welcome recent measures taken by the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), which have enhanced confidence building and will help expedite our reconciliation efforts.

On the national level, outreach and reintegration efforts remain essential to bringing members of the armed opposition back into mainstream society. Nearly 3,500 anti-Government elements have been enrolled in the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program. In the coming months, we expect to see many more joining the Programme and returning to normal life.

At the same time, we will continue to work with all relevant regional and international partners to move the peace process forward, including the United Nations, the United States, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. We are pleased that the peace process has garnered the support it needs from all countries in the region. Our desire for multifaceted cooperation is embodied in the Istanbul Process, which began in November 2011. It is a visionary step forward to achieving a benevolent regional order, characterized by cooperation, collaboration and shared goals. We look forward to furthering our progress at the follow-up to the Istanbul process this June in Kabul.

For the success of transition, we must redouble our efforts towards a more effective, accountable and transparent Government that is ready to deliver services and safeguard national interests as set out in the Kabul process. Afghanistan continues its fight to strengthen good governance; end corruption; promote human rights, including gender equality; combat illegal narcotics and foster greater economic opportunities.

For Afghans, a successful transition is the key for peace and stability. We are well aware of the challenges, but the bitter memories of war and conflict only strengthen our determination to work together to secure a peaceful future. However, our confidence needs to be deepened through real cooperation, trust and mutual respect between Afghanistan and the international community. The recent incidents — such as the brutal killing of 16 innocent civilians, mostly children and women, in the Panjwayi district of Kandahar province, the burning of the Holy Koran

north of Kabul and similar atrocities — could undermine our trust and cooperation by inciting deep sorrow, anger and frustration among Afghan people. It is imperative that such incidents cease immediately and that the perpetrators be held accountable.

Over the past 10 years, the United Nations has been in the forefront of helping the Afghan people. The United Nations has supported the efforts of the Afghan Government to build a more peaceful future for the country.

While Afghanistan continues its transition, it will still benefit broadly from the support of the United Nations. We are thankful to the Secretary-General for the comprehensive review of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) mandated activities, for United Nations support in Afghanistan and for the work of the review team. The Afghan Government fully agrees with the findings of the Secretary-General's report (S/2012/133) that UNAMA should use its good offices to continue to support Afghan-led political processes and capacity-building for Afghan institutions. We appreciate the report's emphasis on the United Nations work to protect the human rights of all Afghans, and we share the report's assertion that aid coherence in support of Afghanistan's development agenda is crucial.

We are satisfied with the work of the comprehensive review. Of course, plenty of work for us all lies on the road ahead. The size and configuration of the United Nations presence needs to be considered in the coming months, as well as the application of a one-United Nations approach to streamlining United Nations activities, based on the evolving realities on the ground and the needs of transition. The Government of Afghanistan looks forward to close cooperation in that regard.

A long-term, strategic examination of the renewed posture of the United Nations in Afghanistan will be needed in order to answer some of the bigger questions about the Organization's political role, the necessary steps towards reinforcing integration and delivery as one, and questions about bringing more transparency and accountability into the management of resources and the 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.

In the past 10 years, Afghanistan and the international community have been together in fighting terrorism and working to bring stability and peace to the country. The fight is not yet finished. We still have a long way to go, and we continue to struggle to normalize the situation in the country. That is the aim of the transition. But the transition we agreed upon must be a responsible, unhurried and coordinated process. Afghanistan and its people count on both the conscience and the commitment of the international community to remain steadfast to the many and oft-repeated assurances for a stable, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan.

The President: I shall now give the floor to members of the Security Council.

Mr. Wittig (Germany): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Ján Kubiš, for his briefing. My delegation appreciates the courage and the energy with which he has taken up his new position, and we would like to assure him of our support — for him, for his office and for the many able and dedicated men and women at the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the valuable work of the United Nations in that country.

We would also like to welcome Ambassador Tanin and to thank him and his delegation for their close cooperation in the preparation of the draft UNAMA mandate that the Council is scheduled to adopt this Thursday.

My Government aligns itself with the European Union statement to be delivered later on.

Today, I would like to touch upon three points, namely, follow-up to the international Afghanistan Conference in Bonn, the review process undertaken by the Secretary-General at the Security Council's request in last year's UNAMA mandate and the upcoming UNAMA mandate renewal.

I would first like to refer to the follow-up to the Bonn Conference, in line with the strategic consensus reached between the international community and the Afghan Government to affirm our mutual commitments with regard to the transition process and the transformation in the following decade — until 2024 — all of which now requires further spelling out in concrete terms. The upcoming summit and

conferences, especially those in Chicago and Tokyo, will be opportunities in that regard.

While the international community will be extending additional, much-needed tangible and predictable support for the Afghan Government's development efforts, we note the equally high expectations on the part of the international community as to the continued progress on the Afghan side, including in areas such as governance, democracy and human rights.

In view of the transition calendar, Germany wishes to reiterate its position that fiscal sustainability must increasingly be at the centre of our joint efforts in Afghanistan. Germany shares the view of the Secretary-General that growth-oriented policies must be a high priority. At the same time, the Afghan Government's leadership will be essential in designing and sequencing its national priority programmes.

Secondly, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for the comprehensive review of UNAMA's mandated activities and of the United Nations support undertaken in response to the request by the Council in last year's UNAMA mandate resolution. Germany's particular appreciation goes to the review team comprising representatives from the United Nations Department of Political Affairs, the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Department of Safety and Security, as well as to all those in and outside the United Nations system who have contributed to the review.

The review was well received because it took concerns about Afghan leadership and ownership very seriously and because, at the same time, it carefully analysed questions with regard to the United Nations own coherence. The review concluded that the emphasis of international support must be increasingly on enabling and strengthening the role of Afghan institutions in performing their mandated services for the Afghan people.

Thirdly, UNAMA's renewed mandate was informed by important developments over the past year, namely, the beginning of transition; important progress on regional cooperation at the Istanbul Conference; the strategic decision at the Bonn Conference to enter into firm, mutual commitments and to chart out an internationally supported decade of

transformation; increased momentum towards a political process and the decision of the Council to split the sanctions regime established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999).

All of these developments have far-reaching ramifications that the Council will reflect in the renewed UNAMA mandate. I am very pleased to report the continued, very high degree of consensus in the Council regarding the UNAMA mandate, which exemplifies the continued importance that the Council attaches to the situation in Afghanistan.

The other important component informing the mandate renewal is obviously the outcome of the comprehensive review contained in the observations section of the report (S/2012/133) of the Secretary-General of 5 March. Germany fully supports the recommendations made therein. While consultations are ongoing, let me inform participants about the Council's clear consensus that the United Nations good offices in support of the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned processes should remain the essence of the United Nations political mandate. That includes, increasingly, the important field of regional cooperation. In that context, Germany shares the view of the Secretary-General that the United Nations has a lot to contribute to the inclusiveness of the political process and in support of Afghan institutions. That also holds true for the continued improvements in the electoral process, to which the Afghan Government is firmly committed.

Germany also shares the opinion of the Secretary-General that the protection, promotion and fulfilment of the human rights of all Afghans should become increasingly central to UNAMA's mandate. The draft mandate includes important provisions in that regard, with a view of the role of women and girls in political processes and the implication of those processes for human rights, a subject on which the Council puts special emphasis this year.

The new mandate represents a true milestone in the relationship between the United Nations and Afghanistan. It has been customized according to both the imperatives of the transition process and the comparative advantages of the United Nations. At its core lies the strong consensus between the Government of Afghanistan and the United Nations about the invaluable contribution of the United Nations to a secure, strong and democratic future for Afghanistan.

To conclude, Germany would like to emphasize particularly the constructive spirit of all Council members in the mandate negotiations and to once more thank its Afghan partners for their close cooperation and friendship.

Mr. Cabral (Portugal): At the outset, I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš for his briefing. I also welcome to the Security Council Ambassador Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, and I thank him for his statement.

Portugal also aligns itself with the statement to be delivered in the name of the European Union.

Next Thursday, the Security Council will be called upon to adopt a draft resolution renewing the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Portugal agrees with the basic proposals contained in that mandate. In it, the Security Council builds upon the enhanced role of the Afghan Government and, overall, of the national institutions in the process of transition and increased Afghan leadership and ownership. Such emphasis is a recognition of the fact that Afghan institutions are on the way to an increased capacity to undertake their constitutional mandate for the Afghan people in all aspects of the country's activity. At the same time, the proposed renewed mandate aims at striking a balance between the growing fulfilment of that objective and the need for an active, strong and secure presence of the United Nations throughout Afghanistan. UNAMA's leadership and coordination role is thus strengthened by such a balance, and by the clear priorities and objectives laid out in the draft resolution.

A significant part of the transition to full Afghan leadership and ownership is clearly the consolidation of the rule of law and human rights sector in the country. That is an area where the action of the State is perhaps more visible to foreign partners and more keenly felt by the population. In that regard, the action undertaken to address serious problems in the correctional system is encouraging despite the serious challenges that still exist. It is important that UNAMA and humanitarian actors are able to work on those issues with relevant Government interlocutors.

On the same note, we are encouraged by the care put into the mandate of UNAMA regarding human rights, notably the human rights of women and girls. The Mission's capacity in this area will continue to

rank high in its priorities and in ours. The Mission will continue to support the efforts undertaken by the Afghan authorities, such as the full implementation of the law on the elimination of violence against women. The Mission will also continue to assess the situation of civilians, notably children, and the participation of women in political life and processes in Afghanistan, and to play a relevant role in humanitarian action. The relevance of this task, particularly during the coming months, cannot be overstated.

Secondly, in discharging their mission, international forces and international assistance face a deteriorating environment in Afghanistan. The current situation is the product of deeply regrettable actions, some of them mutually avoidable, some unpredictable. These events have had a strong impact on the population, as indeed they had on all of us friends and partners of Afghanistan. Apologies have been made and responsibilities accepted. It is now fundamental that the achievements already attained by international assistance in Afghanistan, both civil and military, are not endangered by these events. This is an undertaking for all stakeholders in Afghanistan, including the national authorities.

In these circumstances, it is clear that the coming summits and conferences will have increased importance, namely, the NATO summit in Chicago, in May, the conference on refugees in May in Switzerland, the follow-up ministerial meeting of the Istanbul conference in June and the Tokyo summit next July. The rapid sequence of these major events is a good measure of the commitment of the international community to Afghanistan and the Afghan people, and of its interest in seizing the opportunity to consolidate the foundations of security, social and economic development and the regional integration of Afghanistan.

Portugal, as a partner of Afghanistan, is working towards, and looking forward to, outcomes from those meetings that may prove successful for the people of Afghanistan. Broad national consensus in Afghanistan regarding governance, development and the rule of law, as well as on development strategies and initiatives, is vital for a sustainable transition and, ultimately, for the success of the peace and reconciliation process.

Recent developments in the relations between State institutions, such as the National Assembly and the Government, are signs to be welcomed. UNAMA's

role in the national political sphere, namely, by working for the strengthening of national electoral institutions at the request of Afghan authorities, deserves the Security Council's full support.

I conclude by reiterating my country's support for the mandate that we are preparing to approve. It is an ambitious mandate for UNAMA, and rightly so, given the priorities identified by the Afghan national authorities and the United Nations. International assistance to Afghanistan must adapt as new necessities arise and the situation on the ground changes. I wish the best to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Kubiš in the implementation of the mandate, and I assure him that we in the Security Council will continue to be ready to support the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan as required.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2012/133), which is the basis for today's meeting. We also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jan Kubiš and the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Zahir Tanin, for their respective briefings. Guatemala supports Afghanistan in its efforts to achieve democracy, prosperity and peace.

As we all know, Afghanistan has been on the agendas of the Security Council and the international community for many years. Many conferences have been convened to mobilize resources and take steps towards peaceful reconstruction of the country and a better life for its people. The endeavour is a complex one whose execution falls to the Afghan people themselves. Progress must be made simultaneously on political stabilization, security, development and the rule of law.

We are concerned that the security situation remains problematic. We especially regret the frequent bloody incidents with civilian victims. The international community must redouble its efforts to support the Afghan Government in achieving sufficient stability to move towards the gradual transfer of security maintenance to the Government.

We support the long-term commitments taken on by the international community at the Bonn Conference last December, aimed at spurring political development in the country, which depends, *inter alia*, on reconciliation among various groups of the population. We welcome the process, building on commitments

previously undertaken in London and Kabul, as well as a structured follow-up and a clear timetable for its implementation. The upcoming regional conferences in Tokyo and Kabul will provide further opportunities for progress.

We encourage all to carry on with the road map and not to be sidetracked from the successes achieved through cooperation between the international community and Afghanistan. We must not lose sight of the big picture, even as we recognize that much remains to be done. Guatemala supports the transition under the leadership and ownership of Afghanistan, even as we acknowledge the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security. That includes confronting the transnational problem of drug trafficking that plagues the country and the region. We applaud the long-term commitment of the United Nations to cooperating with the Government and people of Afghanistan. We lend our full support to the excellent work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

We would like to make a few points about the UNAMA mandate. First of all, we endorse the recommendations of the mandate review team, which include the United Nations taking the role of facilitator rather than implementer. Secondly, we support extending UNAMA's mandate for an additional 12 months. Thirdly, we commend the Organization for strengthening the coherence of international efforts in Afghanistan and successfully promoting Afghan ownership. Fourthly, despite some progress on human rights, we call for further efforts to respect and protect the rights of women and children. Fifthly, we believe that UNAMA should play a more active role in elections, which are critical to promoting democracy, the rule of law and Afghan ownership. Sixthly, we eagerly await the Special Representative's of the future presence of UNAMA at the subnational level, as called for in paragraph 76 the Secretary-General's report.

Lastly, we would like to mention the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme. We note the number of armed groups identified in the report as participating in the reintegration process, which is a highly positive development. We fully endorse the principles and outcome of the Bonn Conference, especially those reflected in paragraph 18 of the Conference Conclusions. We also support the work of

the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), which is a positive addition to efforts for national reconciliation in Afghanistan. We further believe that UNAMA should continue to support the Government's efforts to build its capacities and to promote the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme.

Mr. Sangqu (South Africa): We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš, for introducing the quarterly report of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan (S/2012/133). South Africa welcomes the participation of the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Zahir Tanin, at this debate, and we thank him for his statement.

There has been notable progress in Afghanistan over the past few months, particularly towards strengthening Afghan leadership and ownership. Significant progress has also been achieved towards inclusive national and regional processes to enhance peace, reintegration and reconciliation in Afghanistan.

Nonetheless, Afghanistan continues to face challenges in its endeavour to achieve stability and development. Key among them are the security situation, a worsening humanitarian situation, rule of law and human rights challenges, and continued violence that has resulted in civilian casualties, which continue to increase. South Africa stresses that, given the magnitude of those challenges, a comprehensive strategy incorporating security, humanitarian efforts, good governance and socio-economic development is required. In that regard, we would like to underscore the central role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in supporting the Government of Afghanistan and in coordinating international assistance to the country. Crucially, the continued role played by bilateral and multilateral partners remains indispensable.

Political dialogue and reconciliation is a critical factor for the Afghan people and its Government to ensure sustainable peace for the country, which has suffered severely as a result of continued insecurity. We wish to affirm our principled view that there can be no military solution to the conflict in Afghanistan.

In that regard, we welcome the Afghan Government's initiatives to engage with the armed opposition and the continued calls by President Karzai for the armed opposition to lay down its arms.

Engagement with all elements of the armed opposition should be viewed as moving the country forward and should not in any way compromise the achievements of the past 10 years.

With regard to efforts to strengthen political outreach activities, we welcome the implementation of the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme, which has already resulted in the reintegration of thousands of ex-combatants. The Traditional Loya Jirga, held in November 2011, was an important catalyst in that regard. Security at the national level should continue to be reinforced by efforts to consolidate peace, stability and development at the regional level.

We welcome the political dialogue and cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours during the reporting period. There has been significant bilateral contact between Afghanistan and countries of the region, which has resulted in strengthened economic, political, security and socio-cultural links. Those initiatives intensified following the Istanbul Conference, jointly convened by Turkey and UNAMA, which developed confidence-building measures to improve regional cooperation. We welcome the follow-up ministerial conference in Kabul, tentatively scheduled for 11 June, to continue expanding regional cooperation.

We further welcome the improved operational effectiveness of the Afghan National Security Forces. Efforts to operationalize and professionalize the Afghan national security forces have seen improvements at both the quantitative and the qualitative levels. That is demonstrated by the increased number of Afghan-led and Afghan-partnered operations. It is an important development that should be sustained as the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) gradually transfers full security responsibility to the Afghan National Security Forces by 2014.

However, we are concerned by recent developments, which have witnessed increased tensions between members of local communities and ISAF forces. We call on ISAF to undertake efforts to mitigate the loss of civilian life and to respect the cultural and religious heritage of the population.

My delegation continues to believe that there is a close link between development and security in Afghanistan. The socio-economic challenges facing

Afghanistan are significant. It is therefore important that, despite the financial situation facing the international community, we should continue our support to the Government and people of Afghanistan, in line with the commitments of the Bonn Conference, in the area of direct financial support towards its long-term economic growth. The upcoming Tokyo and Chicago conferences will therefore be important in consolidating global support for Afghanistan's long-term economic sustainability.

Over the past 10 years, UNAMA has played a crucial role in assisting the people of Afghanistan in laying the foundations for sustainable peace and development. South Africa supports the recommendation of the Secretary-General that UNAMA's mandate be extended for a further 12 months and that it continue its integrated mandate, which should, inter alia, include its good-offices role and political outreach in support of Afghan-led processes and the promotion of the human rights of all Afghans and a coherent international civilian engagement with the Government's development agenda and programmes.

In conclusion, national ownership and leadership remain crucial to achieving political, security and socio-economic progress in Afghanistan as it enters the next phase of its transition. For its part, the international community should continue its supportive role in the country's move from conflict to stability and prosperity.

I wish Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš and his team, including his new deputy, Mr. Michael Keating, the best. South Africa fully supports him as he diligently implements UNAMA's mandate.

Mr. Tarar (Pakistan): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important debate. We commend you for your able stewardship of the Council. We are grateful to Ambassador Zahir Tanin for his statement. We also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš for his presentation to the Security Council today. Under his able leadership, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is implementing a challenging mandate. Pakistan has always supported and facilitated the work of UNAMA. We will continue to do so.

Since its inception, UNAMA has led international State-building efforts in Afghanistan. As Afghan

institutions come of age, complete national ownership will be essential for the further consolidation of statehood. We look forward to the increasingly effective role of the Afghan leadership in consolidating its institutions and transitioning to full responsibilities in all sectors.

With a reviewed mandate, UNAMA should continue to align itself with the transition process. To an extent, UNAMA's success will depend on our collective work in the Security Council. The Council must enable UNAMA 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. We must therefore pay closer attention to the aspirations of Afghanistan's leaders, as well as the sentiments of its people.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2012/133) under consideration today provides useful updates on the situation in Afghanistan. It documents progress in the transition process against pre-identified benchmarks. The Secretary-General has rightly observed that progress in governance, development and the sustainable transition of security responsibilities is fundamentally interlinked.

The Secretary-General's report also highlights fiscal sustainability and potential funding gaps in meeting the various targets in transition. It also cautions against donor fatigue and fiscal constraints in the international economic climate.

Pakistan would underline the need to maintain the current political and financial interest in the transition process with a view to setting Afghanistan on a sustainable course. The value of long-term international support and private-sector investment in facilitating the transition cannot be overemphasized.

Pakistan is committed to peace, stability and development in Afghanistan. As agreed by our two Foreign Ministers in Kabul on 1 February in the joint communiqué, a strong, robust and independent bilateral relationship between the two countries would greatly contribute to peace and stability in the region.

Our two countries are deepening interaction in diverse fields, including security, development, transit trade, economic and investment linkages, as well as infrastructure and energy. Our documented bilateral trade has reached \$2.5 billion, and the target set by our leadership to double it by 2015 is well within reach.

Our bilateral assistance to Afghanistan is more than we provide to any other country.

The Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Economic Commission met in Islamabad last month to discuss the modalities and timelines of various transregional economic projects. Our scholarship programme for facilitating higher education for Afghan students in Pakistan continues. More than 1,400 Afghan students have so far benefited from the programme, while some 7,000 are enrolled in Pakistani universities and professional colleges.

High-level contacts between Pakistan and Afghanistan drive our bilateral cooperation. We were privileged to receive the Afghan President, together with the President of Iran, for the third Trilateral Summit in Islamabad last month. As mentioned earlier, our Foreign Minister visited Kabul last month. Parliamentary exchanges between the two countries are strengthening mutual understanding and goodwill.

In the area of security, Pakistan has always sought closer engagement with Afghanistan and its international partners on real issues that lie beyond polemics. The interdiction of illegal cross-border movement is vital to counter-terrorism, drug trafficking and commercial smuggling. It is a joint responsibility that needs to be discharged more vigorously. Pakistan has established over 1,000 posts along its border with Afghanistan. More than 120,000 Pakistani troops are deployed on our side of the border, at considerable financial cost. That needs to be matched on the other side of the international border.

In a country suffering from four decades of war, the vexing question of security cannot be resolved by externalizing the problem or by imposing another war. Military action cannot solve problems. We only disregard the lessons of history at our peril. A comprehensive approach, under complete Afghan ownership, is essential to address that challenge.

Pakistan has always supported an Afghan-led and inclusive reconciliation process. The Prime Minister of Pakistan, in response to an unprecedented appeal from the President of Afghanistan, issued an important statement on 24 February to reiterate our long-standing support for reconciliation in Afghanistan. Allow me to share some portions of the Prime Minister's statement.

“Pakistan firmly believes that respect for Afghanistan's sovereignty, independence, unity

and territorial integrity, as well as adherence to the principles of non-interference in internal affairs of Afghanistan, are of critical importance.

“We also believe that the process of national reconciliation must be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned. It is imperative to promote an intra-Afghan consensus for a durable political settlement that accords with the aspirations of the people of Afghanistan as a whole.

“It is now time to turn a new leaf and open a new chapter in the history of Afghanistan. It is time to now combine the strengths of the Afghan people, in the true spirit of our noble religion, Islam, and in accordance with the glorious traditions of the Afghans to build peace and bring prosperity to Afghanistan.

“In this spirit, I would like to appeal to the Taliban leadership as well as to all other Afghan groups, including Hezb-e Islami, to participate in an intra-Afghan process for national reconciliation and peace.

“It is our sincere hope that the Taliban leadership, Hezb-e Islami and all other political leaders will respond positively to my appeal and agree to enter into direct negotiations in the framework of an intra-Afghan process for reconciliation and peace in Afghanistan.

“Pakistan, on its part, will support such authentic Afghan processes and is prepared to do whatever it can for its success.

“I would like to appeal to the international community to support fully national reconciliation and peace in Afghanistan.

“We are appreciative of the important initiative taken by President Hâmid Karzai and wish the intra-Afghan process every success”.

I will conclude by highlighting two issues of great importance that I hope will be duly prioritized in the work of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Kubiš and in our collective deliberations on Afghanistan.

The first is Afghanistan’s drug situation, which is a serious and growing challenge not only for Afghanistan but also for the rest of the world. Our collective goal must be the complete eradication of poppy cultivation in Afghanistan and the progressive

elimination of manufacturing and trafficking of its higher derivatives. We need to pay more attention to this issue, which, regrettably, has worsened recently. Pakistan will also support regional efforts and initiatives to counter that threat.

Another issue is the presence of a large number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran. We would like to remind the Council that, during the past 10 years, Pakistan’s average annual budget for Afghan refugees has nearly doubled in proportion with international assistance, despite a decrease in the number of refugees. After 10 years of internationally assisted State- and institution-building in Afghanistan, this trend should be reversed and more refugees should be repatriated. We urge further international focus on the issue and hope that the forthcoming conference in Switzerland will be a success. I will also urge the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to record the trends and figures relating to the return or otherwise of Afghan refugees in his quarterly reports on a regular basis.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for scheduling today’s debate on the situation in Afghanistan. I also thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for his statement. I would also like to thank Mr. Ján Kubiš, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for his briefing, as well as the Secretary-General for his latest report on Afghanistan (S/2012/133).

It is now more than a decade since the international community came together to assist Afghanistan with the shared goal of eliminating terrorism and the safe havens and sanctuaries from where it is emanating, right from the source, and to set the country firmly on the path to security, recovery, reconstruction and development. The progress made since then cannot be underestimated. However, the journey is far from over and much more needs to be done.

The past few months have witnessed important high-level regional and international engagements on Afghanistan. The Istanbul Conference provided a new impetus to regional cooperation. The outcome of the Bonn Conference, as embodied in the Bonn Conference conclusions, was an expression of the international community’s determination and political commitment

to sustained long-term engagement with Afghanistan. The upcoming conferences in 2012, including the NATO Chicago summit in May on security, the follow-up ministerial conference in Kabul in June on regional cooperation, and the Tokyo conference in July on development, will be instrumental in working out clearly defined and tangible commitments in the critical areas of security, governance, trade promotion, investment, development and regional cooperation. Afghanistan today confronts major challenges in those areas and will need considerable assistance for a long time, even beyond the transition period, to address those challenges.

First and foremost, concerns on the security front continue to remain paramount. The security gains achieved during the past decade are still tenuous and fragile. Terrorist violence shows no sign of receding and civilian casualties attributed to anti-Government elements have continued to rise over the past five years, reaching a peak in 2011. Terrorism continues to find sustenance and support from a dangerous osmosis of ideologies, ambitions, training and operations among the syndicate of terrorism in the region, with suicide terrorism as its main technique and targets not limited to Afghanistan. We need concerted action to isolate and root out this syndicate of terrorism, which includes elements of the Al-Qaida, Taliban, Lashkar-e-Taiba and other terrorist and extremist groups operating mainly from outside Afghanistan's borders.

Afghanistan needs assistance and support to build its capacity to tackle the critical challenges of terrorism, including suicide terrorism, the religious extremism that fuels it and the drug trafficking that sustains it. We must ensure that Afghanistan's security is ensured through non-interference in its internal affairs. As Afghanistan moves ahead with the transition process, we must take into account the conditions on the ground and the capacity of Afghanistan's security forces to preserve the sovereignty, independence and territorial unity and integrity of its nation. We support all efforts for the strengthening of the Afghan national security forces, which must go hand-in-hand with the strengthening of their training and equipping and the financing and development of their capabilities beyond the transition period.

India fully supports an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned inclusive and transparent process of reconciliation, as opposed to an internationally led process, accompanied by an inclusive political process

and intra-Afghan dialogue that should include a renunciation of violence, a cutting of ties to terrorist groups, and abiding by the Afghan Constitution, with its protections for human rights, including the rights of women. It is important that any political settlement not jeopardize the hard-won gains of the past 10 years and be acceptable to all constituents of the Afghan nation. It is also important that the ongoing transition remain Afghan-led and Afghan-owned, be multi-faceted and ensure the protection and promotion of the human rights of all Afghans and lead to the strengthening of the Afghan State and its institutions.

With the gradual drawing down of international forces from their combat role, there are already signs of a transition recession. We need to find ways and means to ensure that Afghanistan does not feel abandoned by a withdrawal of assistance, at least in terms of the quantity, if not the quality, of the international assistance required post-2014. Afghanistan needs a comprehensive strategy for its national development that takes into account its least-developed-country status, its landlocked situation, three decades of conflict and a continued existential threat to its future from terrorism. Such a strategy should include security cooperation, official development assistance, capacity-building and education, trade access, and foreign investment commensurate with its needs. I am happy to state that India is contributing in each of those areas. That is also the approach that we advocate for the Chicago, Kabul and Tokyo conferences. We also need greater coherence, coordination and further streamlining of the international community's development-related efforts, including the aligning of assistance with the Afghan national priorities.

In that context, we are appreciative of the comprehensive review of UNAMA's mandated activities, the support of the United Nations in Afghanistan and the intention of the United Nations Development Programme to channel 80 per cent of its assistance through on-budget support. India appreciates and supports the work of UNAMA.

India has age-old historical, cultural, civilizational and economic ties with our neighbour Afghanistan. During the last decade, our relationship has been renewed and consolidated by our partnership in the rebuilding and reconstruction of Afghanistan. India has pledged up to \$2 billion in development and humanitarian assistance. India signed a comprehensive

strategic partnership agreement with Afghanistan last October, looking to 2014 and beyond. The agreement creates an institutional framework for our multifaceted relationship in the fields of political and security cooperation, trade and economic cooperation, capacity-building and education, and social, cultural, civil society and people-to-people relations. In November 2011, we eliminated baseline customs duties on virtually all imports from Afghanistan, and in December a consortium of seven Indian public and private-sector companies were awarded the bid for three blocks of the Hajigak iron-ore reserves.

We are happy to note the enhanced focus on regional cooperation. Today our investments in Afghanistan require a framework of regional collaboration for their success. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, of which Afghanistan is a full member, is an important vehicle for regional economic cooperation within the South Asian region. Cooperation linking our region with Central Asia through Afghanistan could be a critical confidence-building measure.

We firmly believe that Afghanistan's growth strategy has to be built upon its comparative advantage of abundant natural resources and its strategic geographical location. Those would have to be the building blocks of our vision for Afghanistan as a hub linking the Middle East and West Asia with Central and South Asia through trade and transit routes, railways and highways, energy pipelines and electricity networks, economic projects and cross-investments. Such cooperation should not be only between Governments, but have civil society and business as stakeholders. In that context, we are prepared to make long-term investments in Afghanistan, as we have done with Hajigak.

In conclusion, India believes in a strong, independent, sovereign, stable, united, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan at lasting peace with itself and its neighbours. We look forward to a future for Afghanistan where the Afghan people can live in peace and security and decide their future themselves, without outside interference, coercion or intimidation. We must continue to work together with renewed vigour and unity of purpose towards strengthening the efforts of the Afghan Government in seeking solutions that are inclusive and led by the Afghan people themselves. It is in that spirit that India will remain

engaged with the international community's efforts in Afghanistan.

The President: I would remind Council members that if they are circulating lengthy written statements, they do not need to read out the entire text.

Mr. Osorio (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš, for his concise and comprehensive report on the situation in Afghanistan. The sensitive functions and responsibilities that he has assumed have our full support. I should like also to thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for his analysis of the situation, presented from the point of view of his Government. I wish to convey to him the support of the Government of Colombia and our strong wish that the transition process be efficient and peaceful.

We are optimistic about the progress made in the transition towards Afghan responsibility and leadership in the area of security. It is significant that a growing percentage of the Afghan population can now be found in areas where the Afghan forces have assumed control. However, it is important to continue to increase the capacity and professionalism of the Afghan security and police forces. To that end, the contribution of the International Security Assistance Force and the NATO training mission in Afghanistan will be essential.

We must continue to work towards ensuring Afghan responsibility in the area of security within the framework of the agreed timetable, which is set to conclude at the end of 2014, while taking into account developments on the ground. The recent security incidents and the regrettable episodes of violence to which they led should not hinder the implementation of prior agreements. In that respect, we support the talks under way aimed at resolving differences, and we look forward to a satisfactory outcome.

We wish to stress the importance of ensuring that the transition focuses not only on security but also on improving the living conditions of the Afghan people. We agree with the Afghan Government that confidence in State institutions and prosperity are fundamental to the building and strengthening of stability. We recognize in that respect that the progress made in the area of security could be affected by weaknesses in the

areas of socio-economic development, governability and the rule of law.

Violence remains one of the main factors affecting the Afghan people. We reiterate our call on all parties to the conflict to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights and to take all of the necessary measures to ensure the protection of civilians. Practices such as suicide attacks and the use of improvised explosive devices are ruining the process of dialogue and reconciliation. It is important that all parties show clearly that they are committed to the process in which the Afghan Government is engaged.

We welcome the efforts of President Hamid Karzai to ensure that progress in a credible process of dialogue and reconciliation is a high priority for his Government. We hope that the recent difficulties will be overcome and that the Taliban will commit to renouncing violence and terrorism and accept the Constitution.

We deem very timely the comprehensive review of the activities of UNAMA in implementation of its mandate and hope that it will contribute to the effectiveness of the activities undertaken by the various United Nations entities with a presence on the ground. The one United Nations approach, supported by the Government of Afghanistan, has the support of my country as well.

UNAMA must continue to focus its efforts on critical areas so as to facilitate the political process aimed at peace, reconciliation, security, governability, economic development and regional cooperation. The United Nations must continue to play a central role in coordinating international efforts with national authorities in order to ensure their coherence with the priorities identified by Afghanistan and prevent any duplication of effort.

The international community reaffirmed its willingness to work with a stable, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan at the Bonn Conference. To that end, a number of mutual commitments were made in the area of governability, security, the peace process, economic and social development and regional cooperation. The Kabul process and the national priority programmes must continue to be the policies that govern the commitments and responsibilities under that process on the basis of the principles of Afghan

ownership and leadership and respect for the sovereignty and unity of Afghanistan.

In that context, regional cooperation is very relevant. We wish to stress the numerous initiatives undertaken at the bilateral and subregional levels to address and amicably resolve the various humanitarian and security problems burdening Afghanistan and its neighbours — efforts that also contribute to bolstering the building of confidence.

Mr. Menan (Togo) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank Mr. Ján Kubiš for his comprehensive briefing on the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2012/133). I would also like to congratulate the German delegation on its crucial role in managing the Afghanistan issue and for preparing the draft resolution that will be submitted to the Council on the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

The report under consideration takes stock of the substantial progress made towards the established indicators, some of which I will mention here. With respect to security, the public image of the Afghan police has considerably improved, thanks not only to an increase in well-supervised officers who are trained and operational, but also to the increased role of women within those ranks.

In the political sphere, since the Bonn Conference of 5 December 2011, the debate has focused on the best way to manage the country's political process. From that standpoint, national and regional mechanisms to strengthen efforts towards promoting peace as well as reintegration and reconciliation processes that are open to all have been developed and implemented by the Afghan Government. Furthermore, my country is delighted that the Afghan authorities are seeking to extend their authority in the context of good governance throughout the country, to which the authorities have given top priority.

The involvement of the international community in capacity-building, both of the authorities and institutions, that particularly takes into consideration women's participation and constitutionally guaranteed quotas is to be commended. Additionally, it should be noted that the fight against corruption has also seen progress due to establishment of the joint Government and international Monitoring and Evaluation Committee composed of national and international

representatives. Its mission is to achieve 60 well-targeted aims, which Togo would like to see implemented gradually.

Those encouraging developments have only been possible thanks to a favourable regional context that is characterized by good cooperation on work aimed at peace and security in the country. Such a positive sign could herald the return of investors in Afghanistan.

Togo hopes that the ministerial conference planned for Kabul in June will lead to conclusions capable of improving coherence within existing regional mechanisms. My country would like to take the opportunity of this debate to express its gratitude to the countries that are friends of Afghanistan for their unwavering efforts to help the country to bring an end to the situation of crisis and insecurity in which it has found itself for now more than a decade.

We hope that the NATO summit and the Tokyo conference to take in place in May and July, respectively, will constitute a turning point in the implementation of the mutual commitments defined in Bonn in December 2011. At the same time, Togo is delighted that UNAMA, in line with the pertinent resolution, is implementing its political mandate, which includes good offices, political outreach, support for the processes under way in the country related to strengthening electoral institutions as well as protecting, promoting and enforcing human rights.

Furthermore, we cannot fail to mention the crucial role that the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), under NATO command, continues to play alongside Afghan national forces in ensuring the people's security and protecting the country's infrastructure and institutions.

My delegation congratulates the entire United Nations system as it continues to work steadfastly, in an extremely difficult context, to support the peace process, at the end of which Afghanistan will be able to take control of its own destiny, in line with the decision taken at the Bonn Conference stipulating the departure of a large majority of foreign forces in 2014.

Despite such progress, it is unfortunate that the peace process in Afghanistan continues to face numerous obstacles and challenges that hinder the long and laborious march of the Afghan people towards full autonomy. Those include the recurring question of security represented by terrorist acts and a campaign of

intimidation and assassination targeting senior Government officials and security forces, local political leaders and religious leaders. That climate of violence is coupled with local power struggles.

The recent and unfortunate events that have been attributed to ISAF forces are not likely to calm the ostensible hostility of certain organized groups, such as the Taliban, against the foreign presence that, nevertheless, benefits the country. It is important for a frank and constructive dialogue to be established between the Government and representatives of those groups in order to create a climate of confidence and achieve the task at hand.

Furthermore, the fight against terrorism, drugs and contraband remains a major challenge in terms of ensuring peace in the country. For that fight to be successful, all neighbouring countries must cooperate, in particular through participation in the regional programme developed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Above and beyond those challenges, UNAMA has worked in synergy with other organizations and programmes of the United Nations, and we commend the Mission once again. It must continue its work to ensure stability in the country. That task requires more time and the support of the Council at this time, to renew the mandate of UNAMA for an additional 12 months.

Togo firmly supports the extension of the mandate of UNAMA and at the same time wishes Mr. Kubiš and his team every success in carrying out their task.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his briefing. I also welcome Mr. Tanin's presence in the Council. I endorse the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union.

A strategic review of the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has been carried out, and we are entering a new phase of our presence in the country that is now 10 years old. Since the aims and the format of the international coalition in Afghanistan are evolving, it is natural for the United Nations to adapt to the progress made in the transition process, as well as for the progressive handover to Afghan authorities by 2014 of civil and

military tasks to be fully reflected in the mandate of the Mission, as Mr. Rassoul requested of the Council in his letter of 1 March 2011 (see S/2011/118, annex). The mutual commitments taken in Bonn for the so-called transformation decade that will follow the transition decade, from 2015 to 2024, have also been integrated, as has the regional cooperation process launched in Istanbul last November.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2012/133) contains recommendations from the comprehensive review of UNAMA's activities in Afghanistan, which was also conducted in response to Mr. Rassoul's request. France fully endorses the three areas identified as constituting the heart of the Mission over and beyond 2014, namely, political good offices, human rights, in particular the rights of women, which must remain a priority, and international aid coherence.

The gradual adaptation of the United Nations presence to those tasks and to the new environment created by the transition process will be the main challenge facing the Special Representative, bearing in mind the implementation of the reforms stipulated in the Kabul process, possible progress in inter-Afghan reconciliation and the development of both the regional context and political dialogue among neighbouring States.

The situation in Afghanistan is volatile and each week seems to provide its share of tragedies. France has, along with many other nations present in the Chamber, made the ultimate sacrifice. At the same time, there are grounds for optimism. Regular contact has been established with the various sectors of the insurgency. We hope that it will lead to a political solution to the current conflict via a peace process led by the Afghan authorities that will unite all sectors of Afghan society.

Secondly, following the attacks targeting Shiites on 6 December 2011, Afghans reacted with a remarkable display of solidarity, thereby illustrating their commitment to national unity.

Thirdly, the security transition is now a reality for 50 per cent of Afghans — as it will soon be for 80 per cent — without deterioration in security in the areas involved.

Fourthly, my Minister has just co-chaired the third Ministerial Conference of the Paris Pact with his Russian counterpart in Vienna.

Finally, security questions were given a boost at the regional level during the Istanbul Conference on 2 November 2011. In that context, we will continue to stand alongside Afghans and our allies for as long as necessary and as long as the Afghan Government asks us to do so. It is in that spirit that we will participate in the NATO Chicago summit in May and at the economic conference that will take place in July in Tokyo.

As for France, we will gradually reduce our troop numbers and bring an end to our combat missions in 2013, in accordance with NATO's force planning, while maintaining our trainers beyond 2014. We will continue to work with the entire international community to set up professional, credible and sustainable Afghan security forces. Our commitment alongside Afghans, in particular in civil terms, will be framed by the friendship and cooperation treaty, signed by President Karzai and the President of the French Republic in Paris on 27 January. That treaty will be fulfilled by a significant increase in our civil commitment in the areas of health care, education, agriculture, cultural exchanges, mining resources and infrastructure.

France's only objectives for Afghanistan are for it to achieve sustainable stabilization, eliminate safe havens for international terrorism and for Afghans to gain control of their national destiny.

The success of the transformation will broadly depend on the success of UNAMA. We are therefore convinced that the United Nations and, in particular, UNAMA will have a key role to play in Afghanistan in the years to come.

Mr. Loulichki (Morocco): Allow me, at the outset, to welcome Mr. Ján Kubiš, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and thank him for his presentation. At the same time, I would like to express our appreciation to Ambassador Zahir Tanin for his update on the situation in his country.

Throughout the period covered by the report of the Secretary-General (S/2012/133), the situation in Afghanistan witnessed significant progress in several aspects. Indeed, the national political dialogue among Afghans evolved significantly during that period, and we express the hope that those steps will boost the peace process.

The sustained progress in the implementation of the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme helped thousands of combatants to disengage from fighting in order to reintegrate into Afghan society. Health and education sectors also recorded real progress for the benefit of the vulnerable population.

The security situation, however, remains a real concern for all, despite the decrease in security related events in December 2011 and January 2012, compared to the previous two-month reporting period of last year. Despite those challenges, we cannot fail to acknowledge that approximately 50 per cent of the Afghan population lives in areas where responsibility for security has been handed over to Afghan security forces.

We commend the role of UNAMA for its real multifaceted engagement in Afghanistan, as well as the International Security Assistance Force and its efforts to keep peace in the country in a very difficult environment.

In that regard, we appreciate the recommendations listed in the comprehensive review of the mandated activities of UNAMA, as requested under resolution 1974 (2011). We support 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 communities.

We also express our support for the Afghan Government during the ongoing transition period, which should be completed by the end of 2014, consistent with the Kabul process, and aim at enabling the Afghan Government to fully exercise its sovereign authority over its entire national territory.

We consider that the phase of transformation from 2015 to 2024 will enable Afghanistan to complete the building of its institutions and achieve a democratic and stable country based on the rule of law, respect for human rights and good governance.

Morocco encourages Afghanistan to pursue political dialogue and partnerships with its neighbouring countries, with a view to strengthening cooperation in areas such as security, anti-terrorism, counter-narcotics and the problem of refugees. We value the efforts of neighbouring States to assist Afghan refugees, and we look forward to the orderly

and voluntary repatriation of those refugees to their homeland.

Finally, we look forward the conclusions of the Tokyo conference in July 2012, aimed at building on the outcomes of the Bonn and Istanbul Conferences and at ensuring delivery on the commitments made by the international community towards Afghanistan's stability and sustainable economic development.

As Ambassador Zahir Tanin put it, Afghanistan has a long way to go and counts on the international community to remain steadfast and assist it in making it a successful transition. We hope that the Council, which has an important role to play, will heed that call. To that end, Morocco supports the extension of the mandate of UNAMA for an additional 12 months.

Mr. Mehdiyev (Azerbaijan): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2012/133), and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Ján Kubiš, for his briefing. I would also like to thank our colleague, Ambassador Tanin, for his statement.

While presenting a record of positive developments during recent months in Afghanistan, the report and the briefing testify to the need for increased efforts, including through a continued United Nations presence, to tackle the existing security, economic, humanitarian and other challenges in the country. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) plays a critical role in supporting the Government of Afghanistan. We expect that the mandate of UNAMA, renewed on the basis of full recognition of Afghan sovereignty and the progress made in recent years, will ensure more coordinated, coherent and efficient work on the part of the United Nations in Afghanistan.

Despite some decrease in security-related events during the reporting period, the precarious security situation continued to pose a serious threat to the overall peace and stabilization efforts in Afghanistan. Recent incidents demonstrate that additional resolute measures are needed to eliminate civilian casualties, which along with being a human tragedy also seriously undermine the national and international efforts towards peace and reconciliation.

We are encouraged by positive political developments in Afghanistan, in particular by the progress achieved so far in the implementation of the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme. Azerbaijan welcomes the ongoing national dialogue and reconciliation efforts. An inclusive Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process, in accordance with the Constitution of Afghanistan and with the support of the international community, is an essential element of overall stabilization and an absolute prerequisite for achieving a durable solution.

As the transition period continues towards the eventual withdrawal of international military forces and the assumption of overall security responsibility by Afghan security forces by the end of 2014, it is becoming increasingly imperative that the international community maintain its active support of the Government of Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the timely implementation of mutual commitments assumed at the Bonn Conference is of paramount importance to ensure that the transition period will lay a solid foundation for the transformation decade of 2015-2024, during which Afghanistan will be able to consolidate its sovereignty by strengthening a fully functioning and sustainable State. We look forward to the forthcoming Chicago conference on security matters and the Tokyo conference on development issues, which will give specific shape to the framework and parameters of the international engagement in Afghanistan after the transition period.

We commend the strengthening of regional dialogue and cooperation, which are necessary in the broader context of stabilization efforts. In that regard, the positive momentum gained after the Istanbul Conference in November 2011 should be further developed, and we consider the follow-up ministerial conference to be held in Kabul in June 2012 to be an important step towards ensuring greater coherence among existing regional mechanisms. Undoubtedly, stronger regional ties based on mutual confidence and common vision will also lead to an increase in foreign investment in Afghanistan from the region and beyond.

Basing its approach on the principle of the indivisibility of security and its close relations with Afghanistan, Azerbaijan decided from the very outset to contribute to international efforts designed to enhance the security, stability and prosperity of the country. Azerbaijan joined the International Security

Assistance Force almost from its beginning and has steadily increased its military contribution to it.

Azerbaijan is expanding its engagement in non-military spheres by contributing to developing capacity-building in Afghanistan. We believe that capacity-building for Afghan institutions must remain at the heart of international assistance in order to enable the Government of Afghanistan to exercise sovereign authority in all of its functions.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm my country's full support for Afghanistan's sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity. I emphasize my Government's determination to continue being a part of the collective efforts being undertaken in Afghanistan.

Mr. Li Baodong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš for his briefing. I also wish to thank Mr. Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for his statement.

Currently, peacebuilding in Afghanistan is at a crucial juncture. As decided by the international Conference on Afghanistan held in Bonn in December 2011, Afghanistan will enter a transformation decade starting in 2015. The continuous promotion of the transitional process of peaceful reconstruction aimed at laying down a sound basis for the transformation decade is an important task that must be taken up by the people and the Government of Afghanistan. China welcomes the positive efforts made and the results achieved in national reconstruction by the Afghan Government.

We support Afghanistan's strengthening of its efforts in the political, security, development and rule of law fields, in promoting national reconciliation and the Kabul process and in implementing the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme. We support Afghan national institutions in their efforts to comprehensively assume responsibilities in various fields, especially in gradually taking over the onerous task of maintaining national security. We support Afghanistan in actively committing itself to economic development and national reconstruction and in working to develop friendly and cooperative relations with other countries, especially countries in the region.

Peacebuilding in Afghanistan cannot be accomplished without the help and support of the international community. We hope that the

international community will fully respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, adhere to the principles of Afghan leadership and ownership, develop in-depth partnerships with Afghanistan and provide constructive help for national reconciliation and the reconstruction of the country.

We hope that the parties involved in implementing the plan for withdrawal from Afghanistan will fully take into account the situation on the ground and execute that implementation in an appropriate and responsible manner while ensuring the security and stability of Afghanistan and helping the country to further strengthen capacity-building in the security field.

We call upon the international community to devote greater attention to the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan, honour the relevant commitments in an effective manner and increase assistance according to the national priority programmes formulated by Afghanistan so as to promote the country's sustainable development with a view to addressing the root causes of the turbulence in Afghanistan. We express our concern at the recent incidents, such as the burning of the Koran and the shooting of civilians, and hope that the issues concerned can be resolved properly.

We would like to express our appreciation for the active efforts made by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to maintain peace and stability and promote national reconciliation in the country. We support the recommendation of the Secretary-General to extend the mandate of UNAMA for another year and support the United Nations in continuing to play a central role in coordinating international assistance for the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

As a friendly neighbour of Afghanistan, China has played an active role in supporting, promoting and participating in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. We will continue to provide assistance to the best of our ability and, together with the rest of the international community, make our due contribution to the early realization of lasting peace and sustainable development in Afghanistan.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome Mr. Ján Kubiš and thank him for his extensive briefing.

The achievement of an effective and long-term Afghan settlement is a key task for the international community. The conferences in Istanbul, Bonn and Vienna have confirmed our joint commitment to achieving the aims of the Kabul process. The efforts undertaken must lay a solid basis for the development in Afghanistan of democratic processes, socio-economic recovery and the establishment of that friendly country as a peaceful, independent, prosperous and neutral State that is free from the threats of terrorism and drugs.

However, despite the efforts of the Afghan authorities and those of the international community, the situation in Afghanistan is still far from stable. Against the background of the ill-preparedness of national armed forces and police to clamp down on the threat of drugs and terrorism on their own, of particular concern is the ongoing worsening of the situation related to the escalation of violence on the part of Taliban and Al-Qaida fighters.

Unfortunately, oil often gets poured on the fire by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The recent unfortunate incidents that have produced intense reactions among Afghans attest to that fact. We deem it ill-considered to set artificial deadlines for withdrawing international forces from Afghanistan. We must not forget that one of the main tasks given to those forces by the international community was to ensure the establishment of viable national security structures that could maintain basic order in the country. Our long-term efforts must not have been in vain.

ISAF troops must fully carry out their mandate to eradicate threats emanating from Afghanistan. I would like to remind the Council that the mandate of the coalition was given by the Security Council. We would therefore be right to expect a final Council report before a withdrawal of the coalition forces takes place.

We need to be careful when we talk about national reconciliation. We are convinced that that is only going to be productive if the process is led by the Afghan Government itself. An important aspect of national reconciliation and a settlement in Afghanistan is the implementation of the sanctions regime pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) and the three key basic principles.

Of serious concern is the production of, and illegal trade in, drugs in Afghanistan. The Afghan drug trade is currently a direct and open threat to

international peace and stability. It is the source of financing for terrorist activities. We can only combat the threat together.

Unfortunately, the trends in that area do not give rise to hope. The production of opiates increased by almost 60 per cent in 2011. The key aim here is to eradicate the fields of drug crops and the infrastructure for producing drugs. It must become a real priority for international security forces. Of course, we need to react to the difficult situation along the whole of the drugs trafficking route running from Afghanistan, but without strict, stringent measures to eradicate drug crops we will only be treating the symptoms. The outcome of the Third Ministerial Conference of the Paris Pact, which took place in Vienna on 16 February, is of significance in that context.

We are concerned about the information in the report on UNAMA indicating that more than 3,000 Afghan civilians died in 2011, representing 8 per cent more than in the previous year. An increasing number have died as the result of air strikes by coalition forces in Afghanistan. We continue to deem it necessary to ensure that all parties in Afghanistan uphold human rights and the norms of international humanitarian law, and that no harm be done, even unintentionally, to the country's population and infrastructure.

It is important to note that the picture painted in the Secretary-General's report is oversimplified. Some problems are noted only in passing. This is particularly true concerning the political sphere and the security situation. Little mention is made of the terrorist threat and not one word is said about Al-Qaida. The basic Security Council sanctions resolutions are not mentioned. With respect to the drug problem, the report conveys the impression that there is no problem. A successful resolution of the problems facing the international presence, in particular UNAMA, will require a completely objective analysis of the situation in the country.

Russia is working to broaden its assistance to Afghanistan. We are prepared to cooperate in rebuilding economic facilities built by Soviet specialists, and to jointly undertake projects to construct hydroelectric stations, infrastructure, and oil and gas plants. We have joined the ranks of donors and international financial institutions, including in providing our own resources, including \$500 million

for the enormous CASA-1000 transnational energy project.

In conclusion, I stress yet again that achieving long-term stability in Afghanistan will be possible only through a comprehensive approach on the part of the international community and the phased, careful transfer of responsibilities for the situation to the Afghan authorities. We will ensure that, by strengthening the coordinating role of the United Nations and coordinating the activities of external players in the interest of the Afghan people, peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region as a whole.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): I welcome Special Representative of the Secretary-General Kubiš to the Council and thank him for his comments. He has our support in carrying out his challenging assignment.

I also thank the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for the important work they do each day under very difficult conditions. I further welcome Ambassador Tanin and thank him for once again addressing the Council.

Afghanistan has made great progress, and I want to underscore our support for Afghan leadership and Afghan sovereignty. The United States is committed to backing Afghanistan and continuing our partnership through 2014 and beyond.

I will focus today on two areas: the progress Afghan authorities have made in taking over responsibility for security, and efforts to reduce the corrosive effect of narcotics.

In the past few months, we have seen several significant steps. Last November, President Karzai announced the second tranche of areas that will begin the transition to an Afghan security lead. This tranche includes five provinces in their entirety, and various districts and cities in 13 other provinces. Parwan province became the first area from tranche II formally to begin the transition process last December. All but one have followed since. Now, approximately 50 per cent of the Afghan population lives in areas that are transitioning to Afghan security lead.

The Afghan Government's increased domestic success has been complemented by its diplomatic leadership in the Istanbul process on regional security and cooperation and at the Bonn conference. Afghanistan's neighbours had the foresight to

recognize that economic development in the region will take root only when there is security and stability. At both Istanbul and Bonn, Afghanistan's neighbours and the broader international community pledged their support to the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned reconciliation process. This support is critical.

Since then, regional and international partners have helped solidify Afghanistan's progress. After Istanbul, the United Nations played a key role in supporting regional efforts to implement the commitments and confidence-building measures agreed there. In Bonn, 15 international organizations and 86 countries joined with Afghanistan to reiterate mutual commitments and to deepen and broaden our historic global partnership in support of Afghanistan.

The NATO summit to take place in Chicago in May, and the Foreign Ministers' meeting to take place in Tokyo in July, will be particularly important for clarifying plans for supporting Afghanistan into the future. At the NATO summit, we will determine the next phase of our commitment to Afghanistan. This includes shifting to a support role in 2013 in advance of Afghanistan taking full responsibility for security in 2014. As President Obama reiterated last week, we are going to complete this mission responsibly.

I also want to re-emphasize President Obama's message that we are deeply saddened by the events that took place last week in Kandahar. That incident was tragic and shocking. United States Secretary of Defense Panetta has expressed our commitment to getting the facts as quickly as possible and to holding accountable anyone responsible.

On the issue of narcotics, we welcome the discussions that took place in Vienna in February at the Third Ministerial Conference of the Paris Pact on controlling the flow of opiates from Afghanistan. This was the first such meeting in five years, and brought the Paris Pact's 57 partner States together to discuss how best to combat narcotics trafficking from Afghanistan.

The problem before us is complex and entrenched; it funds terrorism and violence, blocks the emergence of legitimate livelihoods, and ruins lives. Yet we know that a better future is possible, freeing Afghanistan and its neighbours from the curse of drug addiction and economic dependence on this illicit trade. On the ground today in Helmand province, the Afghan Government is driving forward an innovative

food-zone programme that, with international support, has reduced poppy cultivation by over 36 per cent since 2009. The eradication programme sponsored by the Afghan Ministry of Counter-Narcotics expanded into 18 provinces in 2011. More Afghan provinces than ever are leading their own anti-narcotics efforts.

Across Afghanistan, the United States Agency for International Development has invested \$541 million over the past three years in encouraging alternative livelihoods, including through agricultural and agribusiness training, agricultural credit, and the promotion of high-value alternative crops. These programmes serve over 300,000 rural households each year. While the Afghan drug trade begins in Afghanistan, its causes and consequences extend far beyond its borders, and so must our responsibility for resolving it. This is a global problem that demands a common response.

Security and narcotics are just two of the obstacles Afghanistan faces in building a strong economy, ensuring the health of its citizens, and asserting full sovereign control over its fate. The United Nations plays an essential role in supporting the Afghan Government and people in addressing the challenges that Afghanistan faces in developing a secure, stable and prosperous Afghanistan.

For that reason, the United States supports the extension of the UNAMA mandate for a further 12 months. UNAMA's role will continue to evolve during this period of transition, but there can be no doubting the continuing importance of its contributions. From the use of its good offices to promote regional cooperation and its work as co-chair of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, to humanitarian assistance and its work with refugees and internally displaced persons, the United Nations has shown beyond any doubt its commitment to the people of Afghanistan. We commend the Organization for its vision and tenacity, and we thank the delegation of Germany for its leadership in negotiating the renewed mandate.

Afghans are taking responsibility for their own security, pursuing reconciliation and planning for a stable economic future. And as they do, the United States will continue to stand by their side.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the United Kingdom.

I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš for his first briefing to the Security Council this morning. I also thank Ambassador Tanin for his important statement.

I shall focus my comments today on the importance of the international community delivering on the political commitment made to Afghanistan at the Bonn Conference. We must use this year to signal our enduring commitment to Afghanistan's security and economic viability for the post-2014 decade of transformation.

First, at the NATO Chicago Summit in May, we need to agree a long-term funding plan for the Afghan national security forces and to clarify NATO's role in Afghanistan after 2014. Capable, sustainable and affordable Afghan forces are vital to ensuring that stability in Afghanistan does not unravel once International Security Assistance Force combat troops withdraw after the completion of the transition process at the end of 2014.

Secondly, for any security gains to be sustainable in the long term, we must work together to ensure that the Afghan people have confidence that their Government can deliver key basic services and better prospects for the future. The United Kingdom looks forward to the Afghan Government's implementation of vital governance and economic reforms. The international community must match that at the Tokyo conference by ensuring continued, long-term commitments to supporting economic growth and basic social services in Afghanistan. That is fundamental to Afghanistan's long-term stability and prosperity.

Thirdly, stability in Afghanistan will also depend on the participation and support of its neighbours. The Kabul Conference in June will be a key moment for heart-of-Asia countries to take that forward. The United Kingdom welcomes the regionally led implementation of the Istanbul Process, as well as the support that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has provided.

Fourthly, underpinning those elements is the need for continued progress towards a political settlement. The United Kingdom welcomes Afghan-led efforts to move forward the peace process. We note in particular President Karzai's and Pakistani Prime Minister Gilani's recent statements supporting the establishment of the Taliban political office and calling on the insurgency to reconcile. We have always said that

reconciliation would be a challenging process. The recent Taliban statement announcing the suspension of talks does not alter our support for Afghan-led reconciliation.

Therefore, as we prepare for a post-2014 Afghanistan, there is still much to do. UNAMA has a vital role, both during and beyond the transition process, to coordinate the international community and support the Afghan Government to deliver on its commitments. The United Kingdom supports a strong, continued UNAMA presence throughout the country to assist the Afghan Government in establishing a strong and durable Afghan State.

In conclusion, the international community made commitments at the Bonn Conference in December 2011 for enduring support to Afghanistan's long-term security and development. Now is the time for us to deliver against those commitments, to reassure the Afghan people that we will not abandon them after 2014 and to ensure that Afghanistan does not again become a safe haven for terrorism.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes, in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Rishchynski (Canada) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking Mr. Ján Kubiš for his briefing this morning. I also thank Afghan Ambassador Zahir Tanin for his statement.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada welcomes the diligent work of the Secretary-General in conducting a comprehensive review of the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) over the past year. The next four months will present Afghanistan and the international community with a series of critical decision points, which will define how we continue to progress together towards our common goal of a peaceful and sustainable Afghanistan through the transition period and into the transformation

decade. Canada looks forward to working with its partners to further advance those shared objectives. We are confident that, at the Group of Eight and NATO summits, as well as at the Tokyo conference, we will continue to build on the strategic consensus reached in Bonn this past December — a consensus based on accountability and the assumption of leadership by the Afghan Government in its own security, good governance, and development.

In cooperation with our partners, Canada continues to endeavour to support Afghanistan in its efforts to undertake the remaining challenges of transition. In doing so, Canada continues to invest in the future of Afghan youth through programming in health and education; to advance security, the rule of law and human rights, including through a significant contribution to the NATO training mission; to promote regional diplomacy; and to support the delivery of humanitarian assistance as needed.

(spoke in French)

Canada believes that sustainable economic growth and constructive regional cooperation are essential to ensuring a secure and prosperous future for Afghanistan and the region. Economic growth will only be sustained by concrete efforts on the part of Afghanistan to establish a business-friendly environment and enact measures to strengthen effective and transparent economic governance. In that connection, Canada recognizes the commitments that the Government of Afghanistan has made with regard to that goal in its economic transition strategy.

Canada of course continues to support Afghanistan in pursuit of its development goals. The country must never again become a haven for terrorists and a breeding ground for terrorism. To that end, the real long-term measure of success will be determined by the extent to which Afghanistan can create wealth by attracting and retaining private-sector investment, both from within Afghanistan and abroad, and appropriately leverage it to benefit the Afghan population in a just and broad-based manner. Furthermore, in order to be sustainable, Afghanistan's economic growth must be accompanied by poverty reduction and increasing productive employment, as well as improved access to education and health care.

However, Afghanistan's economic potential reaches beyond its borders and its prosperity will, in large measure, be influenced by the extent to which it

can harness its strategic position at the crossroads of markets in the heart of Asia. That will require the constructive support of its regional partners in promoting stability, security and prosperity in both Afghanistan and the region. In that regard, we commend the recent consensus in the context of the Istanbul Process to focus on a series of confidence-building measures aimed at strengthening an agenda based on mutual benefit and trust. We also look forward to the fifth ministerial meeting of the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan. Canada strongly believes that regional leadership in the planning and execution of a common prosperity agenda must be at the centre of Afghanistan's continued transformation.

To that end, Canada will continue to promote regional cooperation as one of its four pillars of engagement over the next two years, in particular through the ongoing facilitation of the Afghanistan-Pakistan cooperation process — which we continue to believe can make tangible progress in strengthening the management and security of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region.

(spoke in English)

Among the most notable successes in Afghanistan of the past decade are the tremendous gains made by Afghan women and girls. Those gains must not be lost. Canada views the status and role of women as a key barometer by which the success of Afghanistan's progress will be measured. The recent Ulema Council statement, as well as cases of heinous abuse of Afghan women, represents a dramatic step backwards for Afghan women. Although we noted President Karzai's remarks on 11 March reiterating his full support of Afghan women's religious and constitutional rights, Canada will remain vigilant. We expect the Government of Afghanistan to uphold its Constitution and to distance itself from those outrageous remarks.

The protection and advancement of women's rights has been and continues to be a key pillar of Canada's foreign policy. That is especially true in Afghanistan, where promoting and protecting fundamental freedoms, including women's rights, is a central theme of Canada's post-2011 engagement. Respect for the freedoms and rights of all Afghan citizens is fundamental to Afghanistan's security and its future prosperity.

All Afghans must, in our view, also have the right to practice personal religious beliefs in safety and security. Canada would like to underline the importance of tolerance and pluralism in establishing a peaceful and cohesive Afghan society, based on the principles established by the Afghan Constitution.

Afghanistan has accomplished impressive progress towards developing a representative and sustainable democracy. Canada recognizes that Afghanistan's democratic development faces many challenges, and we encourage the Government of Afghanistan to renew its commitment to transparency and impartiality in all electoral and appointment processes.

An important element in ensuring sustainable Afghan peace still resides in the achievement of an Afghan-led reconciliation process, the outcome of which must be in accordance with the principles confirmed at the Bonn Conference. In this respect, Canada supports an inclusive national peace dialogue that encourages 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.

Permit me to conclude by noting that Canada remains committed to our common goal of a peaceful, sustainable Afghanistan led by Afghans with vision, confidence and hope in their future. In order to achieve this vision, Canada stands ready to continue working with the Government of Afghanistan, as well as all our international partners in meeting this goal.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

Like others, I would first like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2012/133), and in particular Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš for his briefing and for the excellent work that he and his team are doing

under truly difficult circumstances. I would also thank Ambassador Tanin for his clear statement here today.

The Bonn Conference confirmed international long-term engagement in Afghanistan beyond the end of the transition and through the transformation decade from 2015 to 2024. The signing of a number of bilateral partnerships manifests that. On our part, we are firmly committed to that objective as well, as specified in the European Union Council conclusions of 14 November 2011. The commitments made in Bonn were mutual. As we prepare for the Chicago and Tokyo conferences, we must ensure that those mutual commitments are swiftly implemented. We note with satisfaction that transition in the security sector remains on track, with the implementation of the second tranche progressing well.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) will continue to play a critical role in supporting the Afghan Government, and will do so with a mandate reviewed in line with the progress made in Afghanistan, in full consensus with its Government and informed by the helpful review conducted by the Secretary-General. UNAMA's good offices, including support for the Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process, and for strengthening human rights and for regional cooperation, will remain cornerstones. Similarly critical is its role in supporting the Afghan Government in the coordination and management of international assistance. In that regard, greater coherence of international assistance with the national priority programmes identified by the Government of Afghanistan is necessary.

A continued United Nations role in long-term electoral reform will contribute to strengthening the role of the Afghan Government and institutions. The importance of that was underlined in the Kabul Conference communiqué, and most recently at Bonn, where there was agreement that strengthening and improving Afghanistan's electoral process would be a key step in Afghanistan's democratization.

Finally, we highlight the continued importance of UNAMA support for the Afghan authorities' efforts to increase transparency and accountability. For all those support efforts, a continued UNAMA presence throughout the country is needed.

Progress in the peace process will be sustainable only if the peace and reconciliation process is truly inclusive, if it proactively seeks balanced gender and

social-status representation and if it involves civil society. Both the process and its outcome must respect the Afghan Constitution, including its human rights provisions and, notably, the rights of women and girls.

At the present time, we encourage particular attention to the continued implementation of the law on the elimination of violence against women. In that vein, we wish to reiterate our firm commitment to resolution 1325 (2000) and all subsequent resolutions on women, peace and security. In that respect, we welcome the commitment of the Afghan Government to the resolution's full implementation through the establishment of the inter-ministerial steering committee on resolution 1325 (2000).

Follow-up to the Istanbul Conference on regional cooperation is encouraging. The February senior officials' preparatory meeting in Kabul laid the groundwork for the June Kabul ministerial meeting by firming up some of the Istanbul commitments. Further progress is necessary to translate those promises into tangible improvements in regional security and economic development. As the recent Paris Pact Conference stressed, regional cooperation will also be indispensable to address common threats, such as drug trafficking.

In conclusion, I once more assure you, Mr. President, of our firm commitment to remain engaged as a strong and reliable partner for Afghanistan after the transition has been completed. The aim of our joint efforts in Afghanistan remains clear, namely, to support the Afghan Government as it puts the many years of conflict behind it and offers all Afghan people the prospect of a better future. To that end, we support the proposed extension of a strong UNAMA mandate.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mr. White (Australia): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to address the Council today. I particularly thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš and Ambassador Tanin for their remarks earlier.

Australia welcomes the opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to international efforts in Afghanistan, and strongly supports a renewal of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) mandate for another year.

The foundations of the international community's long-term commitment to Afghanistan, which must extend well past 2014, will need to be further consolidated this year through strong and clearly defined outcomes on security transition at the forthcoming NATO summit in Chicago, as well as on support for Afghanistan's sustainable development at the Tokyo conference later in the year.

When we last gathered to discuss the UNAMA mandate, the international community was looking forward to President Karzai's announcement on the first tranche of provinces to begin transition to full Afghan security leadership. Now, one year later, more than 50 per cent of the Afghan population lives in a province or district that is undergoing the transition to full Afghan security leadership.

Australia commends the efforts of President Karzai, the Afghan Government and the people of Afghanistan as they work towards the goal of full Afghan leadership of the security sector, as well as the vital pillars of governance and development. Australia joins the international community in fully supporting the goal of Afghan leadership. We encourage the Council to ensure that this message is given prominence in the revised UNAMA mandate.

Australia welcomes the continued presence of UNAMA and other United Nations agencies in Afghanistan's provinces and underlines the importance of United Nations agencies working in close coordination with the Afghan Government. The United Nations physical presence is an appropriate reflection of the Organization's leadership of the civilian effort on the ground in Afghanistan and the Security Council mandate that underpins the international presence.

Australia supports a continuing role for UNAMA in supporting electoral capacity-building in Afghanistan. The ongoing development of democratic institutions based on the rule of law and the separation of powers is crucial to a stable Afghanistan. Democratic, transparent and credible elections will be crucial to shoring up sustainable transition in Afghanistan.

Now is the time for the international community to support Afghanistan as it prepares for presidential and parliamentary elections in 2014 and 2015. Australia has provided extensive assistance in the past to support Afghan electoral institutions, civic education and election monitoring, and will continue to do so.

Without the strong and constructive support of its neighbours and regional partners, Afghanistan's prospects for a secure and stable future are much diminished. Australia commends the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to promote regional engagement in accordance with UNAMA's mandate. Australia particularly welcomes the Istanbul Heart of Asia process as an important step towards building stronger regional engagement, including improved economic ties across the Central Asian region. We look forward to concrete progress, including on confidence-building measures, at the ministerial meeting in Kabul in June.

In terms of Australia's own engagement in Afghanistan, Prime Minister Gillard announced in November 2011 that Australia would conclude a long-term bilateral partnership with Afghanistan. This will underpin our long-term relationship, extending well beyond 2014, and cover a broad range of bilateral activities, including development assistance. I am pleased to say that we anticipate that the agreement will be concluded shortly.

Australia's substantial and growing aid programme will be an important part of our long-term commitment. Australia will deliver \$165 million in development assistance to Afghanistan in 2011-2012. The main goal of our aid is to build the Afghan Government's capacity to deliver services and economic opportunities for its people.

To conclude, over the past decade we have seen remarkable progress in Afghanistan, including strong gains in vital sectors such as health and education. This progress has been achieved with the strong support of the international community, including UNAMA. Our continuing priority must be to maintain and build on these achievements and to continue to support Afghanistan's trajectory from transition to transformation.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Nishida (Japan): I thank Special Representative Kubiš for his comprehensive and informative briefing. I also thank Ambassador Tanin for his statement.

Japan highly appreciates the comprehensive review of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), conducted by the

Secretary-General in accordance with resolution 1974 (2011). Based on the review, it is critically important that UNAMA continue to play an appropriate role, together with the international community, in support of Afghanistan's leadership and ownership and towards building a promising future for Afghanistan.

While we welcome the recent report of the Secretary-General and its description of the second phase of the transition as having progressed as planned, we also witnessed some shocking incidents very recently. We must not allow such incidents to recur and we must stop the cycle of violence. We should also remind ourselves that it is incumbent on both Afghanistan and its international partners to tackle the common challenges of improving security in Afghanistan and also to consolidate the Afghan-led political process.

In this regard, Japan continues to provide its assistance in such areas as security to strengthen the capacity of the Afghan police and the reintegration process. Last month, Japan decided to provide assistance amounting to \$585 million, which includes \$231 million for police assistance and \$5 million for promoting reintegration. Japan welcomes the fact that 3,825 ex-combatants have been enrolled formally in the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme, as described in the Secretary-General's report.

Building on the Bonn and the Istanbul Conferences last year, we are set to make this year even more fruitful. There will be the NATO summit in Chicago, focusing on security issues in May, the first follow-up on the Istanbul Conference, focusing on regional cooperation in June, and the Tokyo Conference in July. These conferences will be the best occasions to discuss the future of the country.

Notably, the Tokyo Conference, co-hosted by Japan and Afghanistan, is expected to be an occasion to build a solid foundation for Afghanistan's sustainable economic development through the transition period and beyond. That foundation is to be based on the mutual commitments made between the international community and Afghanistan at the Bonn Conference, which are aimed at prioritizing the country's national priority programmes and providing concrete assistance within those prioritized programmes, as well as promoting regional economic cooperation.

At the same time, in order to conduct meaningful discussions and produce tangible outcomes through the

Tokyo Conference, it is expected that, prior to the Conference, the Afghan side will make its utmost efforts to tackle issues of governance, such as corruption, and show concrete improvements. In this regard, we welcome the fact that the Afghan Government recently organized a forum to discuss governance. It is indispensable that in our efforts we maintain a long-term view towards establishing good governance in the country. We commend UNAMA's proactive role in facilitating our discussions in this area.

UNAMA continues to play an important role, and Japan supports the extension of UNAMA's mandate in accordance with the draft resolution scheduled to be adopted soon. In order to make the Tokyo Conference successful, Japan is determined to exert its utmost efforts and cooperate with Afghanistan, international partners and UNAMA.

In conclusion, we would like to once again express our sincere appreciation for the dedication of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Kubiš, and reiterate our commitment to supporting UNAMA's efforts, together with Special Representative Kubiš, and all the men and women of UNAMA, who have demonstrated a deep commitment to this very difficult mission.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Apakan (Turkey): Let me begin by warmly greeting Special Representative Jan Kubiš and take this opportunity to thank him for his comprehensive briefing on the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2012/133). I would also like to thank Ambassador Tanin for his insightful statement.

The present debate comes at a time of sorrow for my country. Just a couple of days ago, we lost 12 Turkish soldiers in a helicopter crash in the Afghan capital. Our soldiers were in Kabul to help their Afghan brothers build a secure and stable Afghanistan. We are all united in this common goal. I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for his statement of condolence and sympathy. On this occasion, I would like to reaffirm our strong commitment to Afghanistan.

Important events relating to Afghanistan have taken place over the past six months. The Istanbul

Conference for Afghanistan, held on 2 November, presented a new vision for regional cooperation and good-neighbourly relations across the region that surrounds the country. Recognizing the crucial role played by Afghanistan in connectivity and cooperation across the region, the Istanbul process recommitments Afghanistan and its neighbours to a new vision of partnership for peace, stability and prosperity.

Let me repeat that in Istanbul, the parties recognized the central role of the United Nations. They also welcomed Afghanistan's willingness and determination to use its regional and historical position to do its part to promote security and peaceful economic cooperation in the region. It is a regionally owned process for our common future that has Afghanistan at the centre.

Since the Istanbul Conference, Afghanistan has been actively leading the follow-up process. We are encouraged by the regional support for the Afghan-led follow-up steps on the Istanbul process. Within that framework, the senior officials meeting of 29 February in Kabul took place in a very constructive atmosphere. At the preparatory meeting, regional actors continued to confirm their ownership of the process for building greater confidence and cooperation in the region. They worked on the concept paper drafted by the Afghan side with a view to shaping a new vision of regional cooperation. We sincerely believe that this regional vision will enable Afghanistan to play its long-desired role as a regional hub for trade and transit.

We are now looking forward to the ministerial conference to be held on 14 June in Kabul. That meeting will enable Afghanistan and its regional partners to continue to shape a forward-looking agenda for regional cooperation. We think that the Istanbul process, together with the long-term international engagement confirmed at the Bonn Conference, will further contribute to our success in Afghanistan.

We will continue to extend our support to Afghanistan in order to consolidate the gains of the past decade and to realize greater security and economic sustainability in the future. Therefore, in the lead-up to two major events on Afghanistan this year — the Chicago summit and the Tokyo Conference — the international community should work on a clear message to strengthen the hopes and expectations of the Afghan people. In this context, I would like to express our satisfaction with the Afghan-led security sector transition, whereby the Afghan National Security

Forces now have full responsibility for nearly half of the population.

We welcome the review of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) mandate, conducted in consultation with the Afghan Government and related partners. UNAMA plays a crucial role in supporting the Afghan Government and will continue to coherently assist and strengthen Afghan institutions in order that they may fulfil their mandated responsibilities to the Afghan people. The realities of the transition process, Afghanistan's political and development agenda, and the priorities of the Afghan Government in the coming years should continue to guide UNAMA in its activities.

We believe that Afghan ownership and leadership should be at the centre of our collective efforts. In that regard, the United Nations should continue to be a strong partner for Afghanistan in the Afghan-led peace and transition processes. In the meantime the United Nations should also continue to support regional cooperation and to promote a coherent international engagement behind the Government's development agenda.

Before I conclude, I would like to acknowledge once more the dedicated and outstanding work UNAMA is carrying out in fulfilment of its mandate, in the face of very real and serious threats in Afghanistan. We are particularly grateful to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Kubiš. We trust in his wisdom and leadership at the helm of the United Nations presence in Afghanistan. UNAMA's work in Afghanistan is critical now and will remain so. The Mission has our full support.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mrs. Smith (Norway): Let me first thank Special Representative Kubiš for his briefing today and express our firm support to him and the dedicated staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We welcome the renewal of UNAMA's mandate to be adopted this week. The essence of that mandate is political, not technical. As we gradually transfer power from international to Afghan ownership, UNAMA's role as the guarantor of the integrity of the transition process becomes indispensable. UNAMA serves the purpose both of supporting the Afghan Government and of empowering the Afghan people in their tireless efforts to build a peaceful and democratic future.

Good offices and political outreach in supporting an inclusive, Afghan-led process for a political settlement and monitoring human rights remain essential to UNAMA's mandate. It is also vital that the United Nations continue to promote the capacity of Afghan electoral institutions and the integrity of future electoral processes as the key to empowering democratic institutions. Building robust electoral institutions that can hold elections that meet international standards remains a key area of reform. In parallel to assisting with capacity-building and promoting increased aid coherence in international assistance, UNAMA should focus on supporting the Afghan Government in becoming more accountable, transparent and inclusive.

Today's debate takes place during an important transition period for Afghanistan. The security transition is progressing and will be reviewed at the upcoming NATO Chicago summit on Afghanistan in May. Well-performing Afghan security forces are a key to stability and peace. Another equally important factor is the ability of the Afghan Government to properly perform its functions. Progress on good governance, the rule of law and the protection of the human rights of all Afghans is vital to a sustainable security transition and a durable peace. Promoting the accountability of Government institutions, including separation of powers, will be necessary to build a viable Afghan State.

Moving towards transition, it is equally important that efforts to promote human rights also strengthen the Afghan State's ability to fight impunity and protect the rights of its citizens. It is also vital that the necessary monitoring and watchdog functions of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, civil society groups and free media are not undermined. In that regard, we expect that the appointment process of the new commissioners to the Commission will be finalized shortly in a transparent and inclusive manner. Afghan civil society has a crucial role to play, but the Government should also improve its own institution-building and internal cooperation.

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. A political settlement will not be viable unless it is supported by a majority of Afghans across the political and social spectrum. In the long run, the most sustainable basis for a peaceful future is formed by a broadening of the political space. The strengthening of political parties, civil society

groups and free media will be crucial, as will the establishment of the rule of law and the fulfilment of the demands of the Afghan people for justice.

Furthermore, 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. Women's rights and the empowerment of women should be critical elements of the peace process, and must remain on the top of our agenda. Violence against women remains a major challenge, and the legal rights that Afghan women now enjoy need to be protected through the transition. In that regard, we welcome the Afghan Government's recent publication of its first report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

At the Tokyo Conference in July, we must make progress on the development cooperation with the Afghan Government by making tangible and sustainable commitments based on Afghanistan's own national priority programmes. Norway's development assistance to Afghanistan is long-term and based on mutual promises of governance reforms.

In conclusion, a peaceful and stable Afghanistan depends upon good relations with its neighbours. We therefore fully support the follow-up to the Istanbul process and the regional confidence-building measures that are being developed. Norway strongly encourages Afghanistan and its neighbours to develop and expand political, security and economic relations.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Finland.

Mr. Viinanen (Finland): Finland aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union.

Afghanistan is going through three challenging and intertwined processes: a security transition, political reconciliation and the reintegration of ex-combatants. It is crucial that improvements in human rights and gender equality, which are guaranteed in the Afghan Constitution, not be compromised in the reconciliation process. Finland believes that women's meaningful participation is a key component of a successful transition. The full and equal participation of women at all levels of society is a prerequisite for democracy and human rights. Women are also the keystone of sustainable development, economic success and social stability.

Afghanistan has made remarkable gains since the overthrow of the Taliban, such as improved access for girls to basic education. However, women remain on the margins of political decision-making and progress on women's rights has not been sufficient. Today, Afghan women still face insecurity in public spaces and at home, including inadequate protection against gender-based and sexual violence, as well as lack of access to an unbiased justice system and legal representation.

Since November 2010, Afghanistan and Finland have been cooperating in the field of women, peace and security through the establishment of a twinning programme. We are guided by strong Afghan ownership and leadership. Our aim is inclusive and transparent coordination among the relevant ministries and an Afghan national action plan on women, peace and security. An Afghan 1325 National Steering Committee has been established and meets regularly. In January, the Committee visited Finland. That provided new ideas on how to ensure better implementation of Security Council resolutions and mandates.

Finland will increase its annual development funding for Afghanistan by 50 per cent — from €21 million this year to €30 million by 2014. Afghanistan will remain a most important development cooperation partner for Finland. In our cooperation, we focus on three main sectors: first, good governance, democracy and the rule of law; secondly, human rights and gender, with a special focus on the education of girls; and thirdly, the Afghan economy and its growth, in particular in the mining sector.

We all must work harder to build up better governance, better respect for human rights and a viable economy in Afghanistan. People must see positive changes in their daily lives and be able to trust the authorities. The voices of civil society need to be heard and the rights and security of human rights defenders and journalists ensured.

The international community needs to do its part and give full support to the Afghan Government beyond the transition period. Finland remains committed to do that.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.