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Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7467th meeting
Monday, 22 June 2015, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mrs. Adnin	(Malaysia)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	Chad	Mr. Cherif
	Chile	Mr. Olguín Cigarroa
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Jordan	Mr. Hmoud
	Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaitė
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Nigeria	Mr. Adamu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2015/422)

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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/2015/422)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, Australia, Canada, Germany, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Sweden and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite 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/2015/422, 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. Haysom.

Mr. Haysom: I thank you for this opportunity to share the perspectives of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) on recent developments in Afghanistan.

Since my most recent briefing to the Security Council (see S/PV.7403), there has been progress in meeting Afghanistan's challenges in three distinct but interrelated areas: the economic, security and political areas. Although such progress itself has been modest, this should not be undervalued.

It needs to be stressed that Afghanistan continues to be tested in meeting its benchmarks in all three areas. There is no room for complacency. Failure in any one of these areas would have consequences for the overall success of the Afghan transition. It is absolutely clear that Afghanistan continues to need the support of the international community and the sustained attention of the Council.

The economic contraction that followed the withdrawal of international military forces presents a continuing challenge to the Government to meet the fiscal gap — that is, the gap between the resources it can muster and the monies it must spend. Afghanistan is meeting and exceeding admittedly modest revenue targets. Nevertheless, Afghanistan is struggling to harness the resources to meet its governance commitments and its development priorities. At this time of continued low economic growth, we must also guard against the danger of an increasing shift into the illicit economy, particularly so in the case of burgeoning narcotics production.

Afghanistan is meeting its security challenges, but is nonetheless being increasingly tested. The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) have been undeniably stretched as they take on full security responsibilities. We have seen an intensification of conflict across the country, including in areas previously considered to be safe. Only yesterday, there were fresh challenges to Government security control in an area close to the strategically important Kunduz City. Today, there was a failed attack on Parliament as it was about to review the nomination for Minister of Defence. While the ANSF face operational challenges, their commitment is beyond question, and they are demonstrating continued resilience in the face of insurgent efforts to take and hold ground.

Foreign fighters from Afghanistan's northern neighbours and elsewhere present a particular challenge. There also remains considerable concern that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, referred to in Afghanistan as "Daesh", is seeking to establish a foothold. Addressing that shared threat demands greater regional involvement and collaboration. It seems inequitable that Afghanistan should be shouldering the burden of taking on terrorists whose points of origin and eventual destinations are its neighbours.

The determined outreach from Afghanistan to its neighbours is encouraging. Stronger relations between the Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan are particularly noteworthy, with growing recognition of shared interests. Ultimately, deeper collaboration on

the full range of political, economic and social issues will promote regional stability and prosperity.

The intensification of the conflict was predicted. There has been higher attrition on both sides, but the most tragic index of this intensification is the toll on civilians — so far this year 4,216 civilians have been killed or injured. Just two days ago, 16 civilians, mostly women and children, were killed when a bus hit an improvised explosive device. Sadly it was not an isolated incident, but rather a typical event.

Such incidents take a terrible emotional, economic and social toll on families, especially surviving widows, often left in the most appalling economic circumstances. Many other Afghans continue to be affected by the conflict, including those who have been displaced. Humanitarian assistance is often impeded by the continued insecurity and, lamentably, humanitarian actors have been targeted.

The United Nations will continue to provide humanitarian support to those affected, and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) will work to increase levels of trauma care and meet the short-term needs of the increasing number of those internally displaced. UNAMA will also continue to advocate with all parties, including the Taliban, to strengthen measures to ensure the protection of civilians.

On the political front, there has also been modest progress. Since I last briefed the Council in March (see S/PV.7403), all the members of the Cabinet have been appointed, even though one remains to be confirmed. As of this morning, 21 provincial governors have been appointed, and there has been agreement on other significant appointments.

After long delays, the Government has committed to appointing the electoral reform commission within a week and to providing clarity on the electoral calendar within a month. The term of office of the lower house of the National Assembly, the Wolesi Jirga, was due to end today, without the election for the new members having taken place. The lack of clarity on the future of the current Wolesi Jirga had caused consternation, with the potential for public discord. Fortunately, just three days ago, President Ghani decreed an extension of the Wolesi Jirga until elections can be held.

Despite political tensions, Afghan institutions were able to work together to find solutions on sovereign issues. The United Nations looks forward to a decision on the date of the next elections, as well as action to implement the commitment to electoral reform. Those steps will go a long way towards reassuring Afghans that the democratic institutions and processes are able to fulfil their proper roles and to meet public expectations.

The most difficult aspect of the national unity Government partnership has been to effect appointments. With those now largely now completed and the Cabinet in place, we expect to see a more effective functioning of the Government. Now is the time for a surge in the delivery of public services, the fulfilment of election promises and the implementation of the reforms set out in London and promised in the ministerial 100-day action plans. The upcoming senior officials meeting of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, coming in less than three months' time, presents an opportunity to demonstrate real progress on the mutual commitments of donors and Government to supporting the Government's reforms.

In reference to the request by the Security Council that the Secretary-General initiate an examination of the role, structure and activities of all United Nations entities in Afghanistan, I am pleased to say that we have now agreed with the Government to establish a commission, composed of representatives of the Government, the international donor community, UNAMA and affiliated agencies, funds and programmes, co-chaired by UNAMA and the Government. The terms of reference have been shared with the members of the commission, which will commence its work shortly. We anticipate having a report ready for the Council by the time of its September meeting on Afghanistan.

Peace would have a major positive impact on the capacity of the Government to address its economic, security and political challenges. In the long term, peace is not a luxury, it is a necessity. Unless Afghans can find a way to live together in harmony, Afghanistan's political and security institutions and its economy simply may not be sustainable. Failure would have no beneficiaries.

Despite the disturbing security trends, or perhaps even as a consequence of them, there has been a renewed interest in peace efforts to resolve the conflict. Last March, I spoke of a unique alignment of circumstances that could be conducive to fostering peace talks. Indeed, the essential ingredients for a peace process are

present: a protracted violent conflict with little prospect of a military victory for either side combined with clear signs of a growing interest in a peace process.

A conference hosted by the Government of Qatar in early May reaffirmed the appetite for peace felt by a wide range of Afghans, showing the potential for progress to that end through dialogue. Since then, there have been several similar meetings in various locations, most recently in Oslo last week, which I attended. Those events have confirmed that Afghans want an end to the ever-present violence that does so much harm and shows no signs of abating.

While the Government has repeatedly stated its readiness to engage in direct talks with the Taliban, what is still missing is a clear indication from the Taliban that they are ready to engage directly with the Government. Without that direct engagement, no meaningful progress towards peace will be possible, a point that I continue to stress in my conversations with Taliban representatives. Conference pronouncements have been useful in clarifying positions, but can never provide a format for a systematic engagement between empowered representatives on the conditions for, the agenda of and the barriers to an enduring peace. In short, a direct engagement is necessary for a negotiated agreement.

With leadership, peace is within reach. However, the intensification of the conflict is eroding the atmosphere for constructive negotiations. Just as the voices for peace are growing louder, so too are those who believe that peace is neither possible nor desirable or that the focus should be on war. It is thus critical that the international community as a whole, and the regional neighbours in particular, send the same message to all involved, unambiguously and forcefully. The time to begin direct peace and reconciliation talks is now.

UNAMA supports a direct engagement between the armed groups and the Government, has attempted to facilitate its realization and will continue to do so in full consultation with the Government.

I would finally like to express my hope that, in the holy month of Ramadan, Afghans will be able to come together to worship in peace.

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

I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): I would like to thank Malaysia for its leadership of the Council this month and for organizing this important debate. I would also like to thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), for his statement and the Secretary-General for his recent report (S/2015/422) on the situation in Afghanistan.

As we gather today to discuss the situation in Afghanistan, the country has reached a critical moment in its history. The armed enemies of the country have embarked on a new offensive against the Afghan Government and its people, subsequent to the end of the International Security Assistance Force's combat mission and the transfer of full security responsibility to the Afghan national defence and security forces. Just today, the enemies of Afghanistan conducted a heinous attack against the Afghan Parliament in Kabul, wounding dozens of civilians, including children. We strongly condemn that deliberate attack against democracy and the representatives of the people.

This new wave of fighting is compounded by an unprecedented convergence of extremist and international terrorist networks on our soil — they consist of the Taliban, thousands of foreign terrorist fighters and violent extremist groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. Those groups not only target Afghan forces and civilians with suicide bombings, set improvised explosive devices, take hostages and carry out assassinations, but they also seek to take control of districts and even provinces to use them as bases for their agenda in Afghanistan, as well as in the wider region in South and Central Asia. Afghan security forces have responded to those tremendous challenges with bravery, strength, and determination. In the past months, they have thwarted numerous attempts to control territory, eliminated thousands of enemy fighters and foiled plots designed to kill, shock and terrorize the people of Afghanistan. For the first time, Afghan forces have moved from a defensive to an offensive posture and have shown more capability, potential and resilience than ever before. They have proved their capacity to protect the security and safety of the Afghan people and to prevent the enemies of Afghanistan from sending the country down a spiral of chaos and disorder.

Security is a pressing national priority and is an essential item on the agenda of His Excellency President Ashraf Ghani as Commander in Chief. Our efforts

to defend the country serve not only the interests of the Afghan people; we are also fighting on behalf of every one of our neighbours to uphold the safety and security of our greater region. As the national unity Government pursues that agenda, we are grateful for the continued support of our international partners and their commitment to train, advise and assist the Afghan forces. In the face of the great challenges before us, continued support to the Afghan forces, including air support and other necessary assistance, will remain essential.

While our counter-terrorism and military efforts are fundamental to the security of the country, it is clear that lasting peace requires a political solution. To that end, the national unity Government has prioritized the reinvigoration of the peace process. Recent engagements between representatives of the High Peace Council, Afghan civil society — including women — and the Taliban have promoted dialogue and mutual understanding and generated momentum towards an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-managed peace process. The role of our neighbours is crucial to our efforts to secure peace. In that regard, the Government of Afghanistan has taken bold steps to open a new page in our relations with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Over the past 14 years, an undeclared state of war between our two countries has impacted our national security and the security of the wider region. A new dialogue between our two brotherly nations will allow us to move past that history and work together for peace and stability. We highlight the recent visit of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to Kabul as a positive step and expect that Pakistan's commitment to peace and stability extends to ending sanctuaries and compelling the Taliban to stop their violent campaigns.

Following last year's historic elections, the national unity Government is dedicated to advancing its agenda for political, economic and social reform. President Ghani has appointed all of the ministers and continues to appoint governors and other senior leadership officials within the Government. Every ministry has embarked upon a public 100-day action plan designed to achieve the national objectives identified by the Government's Realizing Self-Reliance agenda. The principles of merit, transparency and accountability lie at the centre of all new appointments and the Government's work. From tackling the Kabul Bank case as one of the Administration's first acts to establishing a national procurement board — chaired by the President himself — to reviewing every single government contract, the national unity Government is committed to combating corruption, ending impunity and strengthening the rule of law. A culture of accountability has emerged across the country as a result of our commitment to ensure the establishment of a clean, functioning and effective Government.

The Government's dedication to accountability encompasses a greater focus on the transparent and effective use of international aid and assistance. Afghanistan is tremendously grateful for the contributions of our international partners, which have allowed us to rebuild our country. At the same time, it is clear that development cooperation should evolve so that aid can play a facilitating and enabling role countrywide. We look forward to in-depth discussions on aid efficiency at the upcoming Senior Officials Meeting of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. The Government has also requested presentations from major donors, international financial institutions and the United Nations on their development portfolios, and it is actively engaged in the upcoming examination of the role, structure and activities of all United Nations entities in Afghanistan, as mandated by the Council.

The agenda for reform and transformation is guided by a strong commitment to advance the rights of all Afghan people — particularly the rights of women. There are now 4 female Cabinet ministers and one female governor, and President Ghani has pledged to appoint more women to senior Government positions, including ambassadorial posts. Last week, President Ghani introduced Afghanistan's first female Supreme Court nominee. That sets an important precedent and shows that the Government's commitment to increasing women's participation is not merely symbolic, but part of a systematic policy aimed at including women at the highest levels of decision-making. The national unity Government is working closely with our international partners to protect and promote the rights of all Afghan citizens. Last week, the Afghanistan-European Union Human Rights Dialogue was launched in Kabul to provide a forum in which to discuss, coordinate and synergize a full range of human-rights issues. The national unity Government is also focused on fulfilling its commitment to carry out comprehensive electoral reforms. To that end, in March the Government established a Special Commission on Electoral Reform, which includes representatives of civil society and the United Nations, and this month the Government announced plans to finalize the election calendar in one month's time.

Afghanistan continues to strengthen cooperation with all our neighbours and countries in the region as part of a broader framework for regional cooperation. In the last three months, President Ghani has engaged the leadership of Iran, India, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, and Afghan senior officials have participated in key regional meetings — including the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process meeting on 25 May. Afghanistan has also signed the draft Afghanistan-Pakistan-Tajikistan Trilateral Transit Trade Agreement, and the final pending documents for the Central Asia-South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project, which will strengthen Afghanistan's potential to become the capital of the continental economy, a hub in the Heart of Asia.

We look forward to the Sixth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan in September, which will be an important step towards ensuring further cooperation and better connections in the region.

Our international partnerships remain vital to Afghanistan's long-term development and prosperity. The historic visit to the United States of the Afghan high-level delegation led by President Ghani in March reaffirmed our commitment to the United States-Afghan strategic partnership. During the visit, President Ghani addressed the American people and the Congress and held enormously productive discussions with President Obama and the leadership of the United States. Together they announced a new development partnership, which will mobilize up to $800 million in economic assistance for Afghan development and reform priorities. President Ghani concluded his visit in New York, where he underlined the importance of the United Nations-Afghan partnership at meetings with the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and the leadership of the United Nations.

At a time when new conflicts and wars plague the world and divert our attention and resources, the continuing cooperation and support of the international community is crucial to Afghanistan's future. While Afghanistan faces great challenges, the country is steadily realizing the goals of the transformation decade and moving towards a brighter future. As we do so, we know that our ongoing partnerships and the support of the international community will be essential to the peace and stability of Afghanistan, the region and the world.

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

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the Secretary-General's Special Representative and Ambassador Tanin for their outstanding presentations. I would like to begin my statement today by condemning this morning's deplorable attack in Kabul against the parliament of Afghanistan. My condemnation is twofold: first, because it was an attack on innocent people; and, secondly, because it was an attack on all of Afghan society and on all of the country's parliamentary groups, which, I would recall, were democratically elected. It took place at a particularly important moment, because those groups were deciding on the appointment of the new Minister of Defence and agreeing on the extension of the parliament's legislative functions. The Security Council and the members of the international community must therefore be more united than ever in their condemnation. As the Security Council's penholder on Afghanistan, Spain is circulating a draft press release that we trust will be adopted today.

My statement will focus on five main areas related to Afghanistan: first, recent developments, the Government and the elections; secondly, security matters; thirdly, questions related to reconciliation; fourthly, the situation in the region and its new involvement in the country; and, fifthly, the Tripartite Commission. Before I move on, I should say that Spain aligns itself with the statement to be made later by the representative of the European Union.

In the three months since the Security Council last met on this issue (see S/PV.7403), there has been continued progress of the Afghan Government, which I welcome, on the road of reform and the consolidation of the gains already made, in accordance with the will of the Afghan people, expressed through the ballot box. It is essential to continue on that road. I would like to reiterate once again Spain's support for President Ghani and the national unity Government. We also welcome the fact that the process of forming the Government and appointing the remaining high-level positions is nearing completion, and I listened with particular interest to Ambassador Tanin's words regarding the participation of women in that process. We also welcome the impetus given to the practical implementation of the Government's work through tools such as the 100-day action plans of the various ministries.

Much remains to be done, however, and the challenges ahead are considerable. The implementation of the reforms, in particular the electoral reform, which remains pending, must be accelerated. The postponed parliamentary elections must be held and, above all, the gains of recent years must be preserved. In this new phase, as in previous phases, Afghanistan can count on the support of Spain and the international community as a whole.

With regard to security, we are concerned by the increase in insurgent violence and terrorist acts, whose perpetrators clearly hold Afghanistan and Afghans in contempt. We deplore the increase in the number of civilian victims of the conflict, which is reflected in the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/422), and we are concerned by the persistent reports of the presence of foreign terrorist fighters. We must not be daunted, however, just as the members of the Afghan security forces and bodies, who are paying a high price for valiantly and resolutely performing their mission, are not daunted. Spain reiterates its commitment to supporting those forces and bodies through the Resolute Support Mission, which provides security training, advisers and assistance.

With regard to the reconciliation process, progress must be made as quickly as possible towards national peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan, and I would emphasize that we must involve the Taliban more. The process must be Afghan-led, as Ambassador Tanin rightly said, or it will quite simply not succeed. It must also, however, preserve the gains made over the last 14 years, particularly in the area of human rights and, above all, women's and girls' rights. We therefore welcome the guarantees provided in that regard on many occasions by President Ghani and the high priority that his Government will give to the respect and promotion of human rights in Afghanistan.

I will now move on to the role of the region, about which Ambassador Tanin spoke in detail. We also welcome the newfound dynamism of Afghanistan and its neighbours, which have recently given a new dimension to regional affairs. As a supporting country of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, Spain is utterly convinced of the importance of that new dimension for the stability of the progress made in Afghanistan. We particularly welcome the substantive steps taken by Afghanistan and Pakistan to enhance their cooperation in the face of their common challenges and shared threats.

Lastly, I would like to mention the Tripartite Commission, which comprises representatives of the Government of Afghanistan, the international donor community, and UNAMA and United Nations agencies. The Commission is to examine the role, structure and activities of all United Nations entities in Afghanistan, as requested of the Secretary-General by the Security Council in its resolution 2210 (2015) and in response to the interest in the matter expressed by Afghanistan. In its capacity as penholder, Spain would encourage the Government of Afghanistan to exercise its irreplaceable leadership in that process, without which the expected result will not be achieved within the desired time frame.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Madam President, I wish to thank you for convening this debate on Afghanistan.

I would also like to thank Mr. Haysom, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for his briefing, and Ambassador Tanin, the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for his statement.

Afghanistan is faced with the arduous task of restoring national stability and achieving comprehensive social and economic development. This year, 2015, marks the beginning of its Transformation Decade. Thanks to the joint efforts of the Afghan Government and people, significant progress has been made in maintaining stability and promoting development, and the Transformation Decade is off to a good start. The comprehensive creation of a united, stable, developed and friendly Afghanistan and the achievement of the ultimate objective, which is to see the Afghan people governing Afghanistan, require not only the sustained and unremitting effort of the entire country but also the continued support and assistance of the international community, while ensuring that Afghanistan's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity are respected. In that regard, I would like to make the following comments.

First, China welcomes the recently formed Afghan National Unity Government and the creation of the Special Commission on Election Reform, which should be able to actively advance the process of electoral reform. We hope that the parties in Afghanistan will be able to help the Commission make progress through dialogue and consultation and ensure that the National Unity Government can implement its mandate and honour its obligations, so that parliamentary and local

elections can be held successfully, something that is crucial to promoting the Transformation Decade in Afghanistan.

Secondly, we support a national reconciliation process led and owned by the Afghan people, which is essential if comprehensive national peace and stability are to be achieved. We commend the Afghan Government's serious efforts to advance national reconciliation, and we hope that all actions taken in Afghanistan will bear in mind the country's need for peace and stability and the interests of its people though the promotion of positive progress in the national reconciliation process. China welcomes the ongoing assistance being provided by countries in the region, and we hope that the international community will support and coordinate with the Afghan Government and people's efforts with a view to creating an external environment conducive to the country's national reconciliation process.

Thirdly, the situation in Afghanistan is still challenging. Security incidents are quite frequent and have led to massive civilian casualties. China supports the Afghan Government's efforts to improve the domestic security situation, and we hope that all parties will shoulder their responsibilities in working to help Afghanistan strengthen the capacities of its national security and police forces so that they can respond effectively to the various security threats and challenges facing the country, and in that way create a foundation conducive to economic and social development.

Fourthly, China supports Afghanistan's efforts to advance peace and reconstruction, and we hope to see those efforts supported vigorously by the international community. While respecting the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, the international community should proactively support the country's new Government as it creates its administrative programme, honour its aid commitments and strengthen Afghanistan's self-reliance in working to achieve social and economic development. We support the efforts of the United Nations and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to address the country's issues. We hope that UNAMA will improve its communication with the Afghan Government so as enhance synergy in the promotion of peace and reconstruction.

Fifthly, we support Afghanistan in its efforts to strengthen neighbourly and friendly relations with other countries in the region and improve its participation in regional cooperation. Such cooperation can help it respond effectively to joint challenges and threats, such as those represented by terrorism and drugs. We would like to congratulate Afghanistan for its participation, for the first time, as an observer at the meetings of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization held in April, and we will work to promote the continuing and constructive role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and other regional entities in the Afghanistan issue. China is looking forward to the fifth foreign ministerial meeting of the Istanbul Process, to be held this year in Pakistan, and believes it will produce positive results.

This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Afghanistan. It is also a year of friendship and cooperation between the two countries. We will further promote our countries' strategic partnership and work within the framework of the Belt and Road initiative to help the Afghan Government intensify its capacity-building and play a constructive role in achieving peace, stability and development in Afghanistan as soon as possible.

Mr. Cherif (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I too would like to thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and Ambassador Zahir Tanin, the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, for their statements.

Chad is pleased that Afghanistan has seen considerable improvements in the past nine months under the direction of its new authorities and thanks to the determination of its people. Significant progress has been made with political and administrative reforms, despite the fact that major challenges continue in the security and humanitarian areas, in regional cooperation and in combating drug trafficking. Similarly, Chad welcomes the Afghan authorities' efforts in the political arena, which have enabled it to proceed to the nomination of a cabinet for the National Unity Government that includes four women, as well as the appointment of 15 members of the Special Commission on Electoral Reform, thus making concrete their commitment to reforms in that area. We also commend the start of the third phase of Afghan civil society's activities in implementing the national and provincial road maps for peace, with UNAMA's support, and we encourage those groups to continue their efforts. The countries of the subregion and the

international community have made huge diplomatic and political efforts to help restore peace and relaunch Afghanistan's development. However, much remains to be done in mobilizing the financial resources needed to support the Afghan authorities' commendable efforts to bring those processes to fruition.

Despite the political progress that has been made, the security situation in Afghanistan is still worrying. The staggering number of incidents recorded by UNAMA between 15 February and 30 April, particularly in the southern, south-eastern and eastern provinces of the country, which accounted for 71 per cent of the 5,033 cases recorded during that period — as well as the two separate attacks on Saturday, 19 June, for which the Taliban has claimed responsibility and in which at least 17 civilians were killed and several more wounded — unfortunately testifies to the seriousness of the situation. Monday morning's car-bomb attack on the Afghan Parliament in Kabul, which killed at least one woman and a child and wounded 15 people in the surrounding streets, is yet more evidence of the deteriorating security situation. We strongly condemn all those attacks and call on those responsible, notably the terrorist groups and armed groups, to immediately halt such horrific criminal acts. We would like to express our condolences to the Government of Afghanistan and to the families of the victims. We wish the wounded a speedy recovery.

The fact that some terrorist groups have pledged their allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and that there are foreign terrorist fighters present on Afghan soil means that the international community must be more vigilant. Furthermore, concerning the fight against drug trafficking, Chad welcomes the latest statistics that indicate a decrease in such traffic and encourages the new Afghan authorities to work harder to eradicate that traffic completely. On that point, we would like to repeat our encouragement to Afghanistan's neighbouring countries and to the international community to intensify and coordinate their efforts in the trans-boundary fight against drug trafficking.

On the deterioration of the humanitarian situation, especially for internally displaced persons as a result of natural disasters and for the victims of anti-personnel landmines, we call upon the international community to show greater solidarity and mobilization to support those victims. In that regard, Chad would like to reiterate its support for the Secretary-General's appeal to increase humanitarian assistance aimed at helping the Afghan people to cope with their food needs and at helping refugees return to their homes.

In conclusion, we support the Afghan authorities in their efforts and call upon the international community to further support the Government. Finally, we would like to pay tribute to all United Nations and humanitarian agency staff members working in Afghanistan under extremely difficult conditions. We encourage them to continue their commitment, working shoulder to shoulder with the Afghan people.

Mr. Adamu (Nigeria): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this very important and timely debate. I would like to thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom for his briefing and Ambassador Tanin for a very perceptive outlook on his country's progress.

Afghanistan continues to make significant progress towards post-conflict recovery. The appointment of all ministers and the formalization of the Office of the Chief Executive and other key offices are notable achievements. Indeed, the development and implementation of 100-day plans for each ministry have certainly given the necessary momentum to the realization of the national objectives. That progress can be given further impetus by the Government with an acceleration of its reform agenda. We welcome President Ghani Ahmadzai's efforts in not only advancing the rights of Afghan women but also empowering them. No less significant is his steadfast commitment to electoral reform, which is essential to the long-term peace and security of the country. The Government's decision to restore the faith of the people in the democratic process is highly commendable. In our view, the establishment of the Commission on Electoral Reform signals an intent to address fundamental issues of governance in consonance with the provisions of the political agreement of 21 September 2014.

In addition to electoral reforms, we believe that transparency, accountability and inclusive governance are other dimensions that must be addressed in order to achieve enduring peace and security in Afghanistan. That must go hand in hand with the promotion of economic growth in order to effectively address the prevailing economic situation. Challenges, such as institutional capacity and structural deficiencies, can be more readily surmounted with the assistance of the international community. That is why we are encouraged by the agreement on the International Monetary Fund programme designed to secure the Government longer-

term access to financial support. We know that some progress has been made in developing the private sector. However, more effort is required to promote vibrant entrepreneurial activity. In addition to international assistance, the private sector must also play a part in the economic recovery of Afghanistan. Foreign investment will be vital to stimulating economic growth in the country. The Government should therefore exert more effort towards improving the investment climate in order to attract more foreign capital.

Political and economic activities can thrive only in a peaceful environment. We are therefore encouraged by the recent NATO initiatives to ensure continuous support for the Afghan National Security Forces post-2015. We expect that it will stand the Forces in good stead and gradually build their capacity to successfully respond to security threats. Yesterday's violence and the attack on the Parliament Building today only endanger lives and widen the gap between negotiation, inclusiveness and the use of force. As the Afghan National Security Forces strive to ensure peace throughout the country, we call on anti-Government elements to refrain from attacks that deliberately target civilians, to lay down their weapons and to respond positively to President Ghani Ahmadzai's offer to negotiate an inclusive peace in the higher interests of the country.

Illicit drug production and trafficking in Afghanistan remain a major concern. It is not only a major source of terrorist financing, but its links with criminal activities also undermine the rule of law. Nigeria commends the efforts of the Afghan law-enforcement agencies to eradicate drug crops; those efforts have been strengthened by the improved coordination of efforts among law-enforcement agencies and the improved capability of the police to conduct operations. We are encouraged by the success of the border liaison offices in the seizure of narcotics, but believe that more can be accomplished to strengthen those gains with the support of the international community.

On regional cooperation, we welcome the active engagement of Afghanistan with its neighbours, especially in overcoming counter-terrorism challenges and combating trafficking in drugs, arms and humans and organized crime. We also welcome the activities under the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process. Both developments reaffirm the commitment of regional partners to Afghanistan's stability, economic development, territorial integrity and sovereignty. It is our expectation that the discussions centred on regional cooperation will address both security challenges and the Afghan peace process and will also prioritize regional economic activity as part of collective security. Through that cooperation, the international community has demonstrated its commitment to and support for peace and prosperity in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan stands at the threshold of transformation. The international community must be eternally vigilant to make certain that the transformation is to peace, security and, indeed, genuine reconciliation and development. In that formidable endeavour, we commend Special Representative Nicholas Haysom for his inspiring leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. The Mission staff's distinctive accomplishments and invaluable contribution to the concerted global efforts to restore democracy, peace and stability in Afghanistan will endure eternally.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Haysom and Ambassador Tanin for their candid and detailed remarks and for their dedicated work to sustain a fruitful partnership between the international community and the Afghan Government. The United States warmly welcomes the progress that both of them have noted in their briefings, which the Secretary-General also highlights in his report (S/2015/422).

We are particularly encouraged by the formation of a Cabinet and by President Ghani Ahmadzai's and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah's commitment to work together to build a better future for the Afghan people. Their leadership will be vital to achieving the ambitious reform goals that the Government has set for itself, especially with regard to electoral reform. We hope that the Afghan Government's recent announcement to extend the parliamentary term will allow the time necessary for the Government to carry out electoral reform. As they work urgently to achieve those goals, they can count on the strong, continued support of the United States.

The progress Afghanistan has continued to make is remarkable when considered in the context of the ongoing armed conflict that is taking such a heavy toll on the Afghan people. It seems clear that the Taliban and other armed groups have been intent on testing the resolve and capabilities of the Afghan national defence and security forces since the beginning of the year when the national forces assumed full responsibility for Afghanistan's security.

The Afghan national defence and security forces have risen to the challenge at great cost, and we honour the sacrifices of the many Afghans who have given their lives for their country and people and those who continue to put their lives on the line. We also reaffirm our commitment to continue to train, advise and assist the Afghan national defence and security forces, including through NATO's Resolute Support Mission. That is a key facet of the enduring United States-Afghanistan strategic partnership.

The costs of the conflict can be seen in all segments of Afghan society. Just this morning, as Special Representative Haysom noted, the Taliban detonated a bomb outside Afghanistan's Parliament. The Taliban's actions today, which the United States condemns in the strongest terms, demonstrate the growing distance between the insurgency and the Afghan people Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their families at this time.

The continued deliberate targeting of civilians by the Taliban and other groups is despicable and contrary to international law. Behind the statistics, however, are real lives, real people taken from their families too soon, their full potential unrealized, people like Dr. Jawid Sahai and Mohammad Mohammedy, who were working to improve the health and education of their fellow Afghans until they were killed by insurgents in a savage attack on a Kabul hotel in May — an attack in which a survivor said that the assailants hunted down and executed civilians, repeatedly shooting victims to make sure they were dead.

How many more Afghans might Dr. Sahai and Mr. Mohammady have helped had they not been brutally murdered? How do we account for the devastation felt by the loved ones they left behind? Amid all the bloodshed and heartache of that senseless violence, the Afghan's Government's openness to dialogue is a testament to the statesmanship of its leaders. Unfortunately, the Taliban has not reciprocated, despite the commendable efforts of international actors to facilitate dialogue. We renew our call on the Taliban to end violence, break their ties with international terrorist groups, accept Afghanistan's Constitution and engage in direct talks with the Afghan Government on achieving lasting peace for the Afghan people. All of us — members of the Council, Afghanistan's neighbours and the international community as a whole — have a stake in Afghanistan's future and in helping Afghans confront the challenges I have noted. We can and must work together to support Afghanistan's Government of national unity, its security forces and its economic development. We welcome the efforts of all countries to work to increase and improve their engagement with Afghanistan, and we look forward to the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process ministerial conference in Pakistan in November. That will be an opportunity to strengthen regional cooperation and integration.

Afghanistan's problems and challenges are formidable. They are all too real. They grab headlines, and those headlines can be dispiriting. But there are other stories too — stories about the daily incremental progress that give me great hope for Afghanistan's future. Stories such as that of a 22-year-old woman from Logar province whose first two babies died at full term. The third time she was pregnant, though, she gave birth to a healthy baby girl at Kabul Hospital, thanks to the use of the partograph, a low-cost tool that monitors key issues during labour so that doctors can make better-informed decisions. The increased use of that device is one of the reforms that has improved Afghan health care. Such stories may not sell newspapers or air time, but they capture the resilience and determination of Afghans committed to improving the lives of their countrymen and women despite all the violence. They offer hope for a brighter future for Afghanistan, and they remind us why our support for Afghanistan and its people must never falter.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): I would like to thank Nicholas Haysom, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and Ambassador Tanin for their briefings.

We want to begin by commending the Prime Minister and Chief Executive of the Government of Afghanistan for the progress they have made in establishing a new representative Government for Afghanistan. That progress is not as extensive as they would have wanted — or we would have wanted — but we know that they have had to deal with considerable challenges, both internally and externally. This morning's horrible attack on Afghanistan's Parliament and the fighting in Kunduz and Badakhshan provinces are saddening reminders of those challenges. So, let us be realistic about it and acknowledge that things are progressing pretty well, all things considered. But let us also be realistic about the road ahead. It is going to be difficult.

We firmly believe that Afghanistan can have a great future, both as a self-reliant and independent

country, and as a key player in the developing political and economic architecture of Central Asia. But for that to happen, Afghans — both those in power and those who empower their leaders — have to decide whether they want to forge a national future or whether they will revert to the pursuit of narrow self-advantage and, in so doing, consign their country and themselves to another bout of fratricidal introspection. We earnestly hope that the Afghan people will choose the former course.

The trials through which Afghanistan has been passing over the past 15 years are incredible, in the true sense of that word. Afghanistan was the locus of the forces that brought down the Twin Towers in New York City, damaged the Pentagon in Washington and, for all we know, might also have taken out the Congress of the United States of America or the White House. Those attacks, while centred on the United States, were an attack on universal human values and therefore an attack on the basic principles that underlie this Organization.

The response of the international community to those events was itself incredible — a marshalling of effort both to defeat Al-Qaida and the Taliban and to restore Afghanistan and bring it back into the community of nations. That effort bears comparison to the Marshall Plan and the restoration of democracy in Europe and the economic revival after the Second World War. We hope that the Afghan people recognize that that was no small or narrow self-interested undertaking. We should not lose that perspective when we consider the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2015/422).

Clearly, there are things to be concerned about, including the slow pace in the establishment of the apparatus of Government at both the national and the provincial levels; the postponement of parliamentary elections; and the continued undermining of Afghanistan's economy and social cohesion by organized crime, especially in connection with the opium trade. Most worrisome of all is the deterioration in the security situation brought about, principally, by the Taliban, who simultaneously hold themselves out as willing to engage with the Afghan Government while increasing their fight against the Afghanistan National Security Forces. Such internally inconsistent efforts are muddle-headed and betray a self-interestedness that negates any claim to be acting for a higher purpose, whether religious, national or local.

But there is also progress, both in the establishment of the institutions of Government and in the maintenance of peace in many parts of the country, despite the efforts of those who seek to tear things down rather build their country up. Maintaining peace in such an environment is no small achievement, and we need to recognize that. We want Afghanistan to succeed. New Zealand's commitment to and investment in Afghanistan — especially to Bamyan province — has lasted longer than our commitment to either the First or the Second World War. And our contribution was, we know, mirrored and exceeded by many others.

In that context, we note, in particular, the willingness of the United States to extend its military and economic contribution under the New Development Partnership.

That is why we continue to pay close attention to Afghanistan and why we continue to support the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. It is the means by which we, the international community, manifest our willingness to walk with and work with the Government of Afghanistan as it navigates the difficult road ahead.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): I, too, would like to begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Haysom, for his presentation. I also thank the Ambassador of Afghanistan, Mr. Tanin, for his statement, and I associate myself in advance with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union.

Like many before me, I would like to express France's strongest condemnation of this morning's attack on the Parliament in Kabul by the Taliban. France stands by the Afghan authorities and the Afghan people in their fight against terrorism, and we will continue to support democracy and the rule of law in that country. We also offer our full support to Spain in ensuring that the Council can react as quickly as possible to this unacceptable new terrorist attack.

As underscored by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2015/422), the political progress being made in Afghanistan is noteworthy, and we welcome the recent appointments in the Government. With the presidential elections already a year ago, the National Unity Government must be able to work at its full capacity, and we welcome the efforts made towards that end. We hope that the reform agenda will be upheld, in particular with regard to electoral reforms which will

make it possible to maintain the democratic momentum that began during the holding of the presidential elections in 2014. We also recall the importance of the senior officials' meeting scheduled for 5 September in Kabul, which should enable the adoption of a revised Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework.

But many challenges remain. On the security front, the spring offensive led to an unacceptably sharp increase in the number of civilians killed. We also deplore the attacks carried out against the institutions of the Afghan State, including that on Parliament this morning and also those against judicial bodies or their representatives. Such attacks are a reminder of the need to maintain our decisive support for the rule of law in Afghanistan.

On the human-rights front, the lynching on 19 March of a young woman, Farkhunda, is shocking. It is a reminder of the extent to which women continue to be the victims of violence in Afghanistan. We hope that Afghan civil society and the authorities will continue to mobilize to ensure that the law on the elimination of violence against women is implemented fully and effectively.

In addition, we are counting on the continued mobilization of the Afghan authorities against drug trafficking. This is a subject of great concern for France because it is a major destabilizing factor for Afghanistan and its neighbours. We encourage the authorities to continue their work to curb drug production and trafficking.

In Afghanistan we are still facing a difficult environment, and, in that context, the efforts of the international community must continue for the long-term so as to support the country and enable it to achieve stability, prosperity and a democratic future. The commitments made during the London Conference on Afghanistan in December 2014 must be upheld, because Afghanistan, more than every before, needs the support of its partners. The agreement signed with the International Monetary Fund is an important element of support for the long term. France will continue to stand with Afghanistan within the framework of the Franco-Afghan Friendship and Cooperation Treaty. We are contributing to the European Union commitment to Afghanistan in the amount of €1.4 billion for the period from 2014 to 2020.

Finally, regional support is an important requirement for guaranteeing the conditions conducive to a lasting peace in Afghanistan. We welcome the efforts made along those lines by Afghanistan's regional partners.

Let me now say a word about the role of the United Nations. While Afghanistan is at a turning point in its history, the United Nations will continue to play a decisive role during this Transformation Decade. The support provided by the United Nations and its agencies to the Government remains key, particularly in order to enable the population to benefit from Government programmes and international assistance. But that role must evolve and be adapted to the situation. In that regard, we welcome the establishment of a dialogue mechanism between the United Nations, Afghanistan and donors on the desirable evolution of the support provided to the country by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. France will be involved in that dialogue and will pay particular attention to the initial results of consultations.

In conclusion, I would like to commend all of the United Nations personnel, who, under the leadership of Mr. Haysom, are working in particularly difficult conditions in Afghanistan. They have our sincere admiration.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): Angola would like to start by condemning in the strongest terms today's heinous terrorist attack on the Parliament of Afghanistan, which reflects the terrorists' hatred of the country's institutions. We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Mr. Nicholas Haysom, for presenting the quarterly report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (S/2015/422). We also thank the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan for his insights into his country's situation.

We commend the work of UNAMA as it discharges its mandate in very difficult conditions, at a time when Afghanistan is struggling to establish a society based on the fundamental values of peace, human rights and social equity. In the most recent debate on UNAMA and the situation in Afghanistan (see S/PV.7403), held in March, the Angolan delegation expressed a comprehensive view of the issue. In today's statement, we will limit ourselves to touching on some of the most pressing issues mentioned in the Secretary-General's report.

The report highlights relevant developments in the past three months. The near-completion of the National Unity Government and the confirmation by the legislative body of Government nominations — which include four women, and we commend that — was a decisive development in the country's political life and a step towards closing the complex presidential electoral process. Other developments include President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah's reinvigorated efforts to advance the realization of the reliance agenda; the establishment of a social contract between Government and citizens promoting transparency and accountability in implementing socioeconomic reforms and policies in priority areas to advance economic growth; and the establishment of a Special Commission on Electoral Reform, which we expect to get to work in earnest in order to complete the electoral process, since comprehensive electoral reforms are perceived to be crucial to restoration of the people's trust in the Afghan democratic process.

Also notable are the Government's continued efforts to launch a process of peace and reconciliation; its stated commitment to bringing about peace through dialogue, translating Afghans' deeply felt desire for peace, despite a missing element, that is, the willingness of the armed opposition to meet the Government in direct talks; the mobilization of backing from regional partners for the peace and reconciliation process; and the steps taken by Afghanistan towards building regional confidence and cooperation through its full commitment, together with the Government of Pakistan, to work for peace; the reintegration of a relatively large number of anti-Government elements; the efforts of the High Peace Council to counter fundamentalism, which fuels violence; the call by the countries of the region to the Taliban to join the peace process; and President Ghani's pledge to focus on establishing peace. Those and other important political initiatives give us hope that Afghanistan may be entering a new and decisive phase.

However, the political progress I just outlined is taking place against the backdrop of a deteriorating security situation, with increased violence related to the conflict, as the Afghan National Security Forces have sought to contain the insurgent activity that has resulted in an increasing number of civilian casualties, the vast majority of them caused by the Taliban and anti-Government groups. In that regard, we share the view that long-term stability and prosperity in Afghanistan depend on an inclusive internal reconciliation process and regional cooperation against the insurgents, and on curbing the flow of foreign terrorist fighters into Afghanistan. Afghanistan's neighbours should be aware that Afghanistan is the battlefront and that peace in Afghanistan is fundamental if they are to keep peace in the region.

We praise the efforts of the Afghan authorities to engage actively with regional partners and, above all, with Pakistan. Additionally, President Ghani Ahmadzai's visit to Iran in April, the meetings held with the country's hierarchy and mutual pledges to enhance cooperation in the areas of security, information-sharing, counter-narcotics, water resources and refugees and migrants are encouraging signals of an emerging regional cooperation between Afghanistan and the countries of the region.

Furthermore, President Ghani Ahmadzai's visit to India and India's reiterated readiness to join the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement are positive developments with respect to Afghanistan's external standing. We believe that implementation of those agreements will contribute to the social and economic development of Afghanistan and its full integration within the subregion.

We are deeply concerned over violence against women in Afghanistan. We urge an end to impunity for crimes committed against women and call for accountability on the part of the country's criminal-justice system. Furthermore, we condemn the public murder of a woman by a crowd of men on 19 March, in broad daylight, in the capital, which illustrates the continuing threat of violence against women. We believe that it is essential, with respect to the credibility of the justice system, that allegations of abuse and ill treatment are thoroughly investigated and properly prosecuted so that those responsible are held accountable for their crimes.

On 19 April, UNAMA and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights released a report, entitled "Justice through the eyes of Afghan women: cases of violence against women addressed through mediation and court adjudication". We hope that the recommendations contained therein will contribute to improving women's access to justice and a change in the mindset of Afghan men towards women.

Finally, we express our hope that the international community will maintain its commitment towards

Afghanistan and that the long-suffering Afghan people will be able to find a way to peace, national reconciliation and economic and social development and that Afghanistan's Transformation Decade will become a reality.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Haysom for his briefing on the situation in Afghanistan and Mr. Tanin for delivering, as usual, his highly comprehensive statement. We share extreme concern over the description that the Council heard today. The Russian Federation is troubled by the deterioration of the situation in the country, further proof of which is today's attack against the Afghan Parliament.

Of particular worry to the Russian Federation and our neighbours in the Commonwealth of Independent States in Central Asia are the very significant terrorist threat and the fact that insurgents have recently consolidated control in the northern regions of the country, especially in Kunduz province. We cannot allow the situation to collapse and thus destabilize the entire region.

That is precisely the manner in which the matter was discussed in the meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, of the Council of the Commonwealth of Independent States and of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. We have more than once expressed our concern that the insurgents will attempt to take advantage of the withdrawal of foreign military forces from Afghanistan to alter the balance of forces to their benefit.

Expectations in terms of the resumption of the offensive in the spring and summer have, unfortunately, been fully confirmed. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/422) contains worrisome statistics in that regard. The number of attacks by the armed opposition throughout the entire country, particularly in the northern regions, has increased. We hope that the Afghan forces will prove themselves worthy in assuming that task and thus be capable of countering the threat on their own.

It is our opinion that the threat generated by Islamic State in Afghanistan is continuing to grow. We are grateful to Mr. Haysom for clearly mentioning that in his briefing. We call on the Secretary-General to devote priority attention to the topic in his next report.

My country is extremely dispirited about the situation regarding the illegal production and trafficking in narcotics in the country. Today, the volume of drug production, according to the Secretary-General's report, equals 13 per cent of the country's gross domestic product. It is well known that a significant share of those resources is used to finance extremist and terrorist organizations. In order to neutralize the Afghan drug threat, collective efforts are necessary, using all of the means available in our arsenals.

The remaining foreign military forces in the country continue to pretend that the problem does not exist. At the same time, the flow of heroin from Afghanistan now affects not only bordering States, but Western European States as well.

The Russian Federation has been working hard, jointly with our partners in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization, to combat drug trafficking through bilateral cooperation arrangements with Afghanistan. I should note that for Afghanistan itself, the problem is no less acute than it is for the international community.

In the framework of our bilateral cooperation with Afghanistan, we continue to train Afghan narcotics police in the training institutes of Russia's Ministry of Interior and the Federal Drug Control Service. We cannot let our attention to be distracted from that problem.

We commend the efforts of President Ghani Ahmadzai to establish a dialogue with the armed opposition with a view to advancing the national reconciliation process. We welcome the position of President Ghani Ahmadzai, who seeks to comply with the principles of national reconciliation enshrined in resolution 1988 (2011). Those principles are quite clear, requiring the renunciation of violence, recognition of the Afghan Constitution and the severing of links to Al-Qaida — which, for some reason, was not mentioned in the Secretary-General's report — and links with other terrorist organizations. It also clearly requires a genuine willingness to pursue peace.

At the same time, we support the effective participation of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in coordinating the efforts of the international community to assist the Afghan people. It is important to continue maintaining the Council's effective sanctions regime, which remains an important

instrument in the fight against terrorism, aimed at Al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations.

In particular, we wish to note that the path leading towards the country's stabilization requires a single consolidated position among the key external players. It also requires a single-minded focus on combating the terrorist threat that is tearing the country apart.

Resolving the security situation will depend on the creation of economic opportunities for the country. It is in the interest of all parties to achieve stabilization in Afghanistan as quickly as possible, so as to shift efforts and investments towards economic development and towards establishing broad cooperation.

The Russian Federation will continue developing cooperation efforts with friendly Afghanistan, both in a bilateral format and through regional integration organizations, including the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, where Afghanistan enjoys observer status. Russia is committed to building an independent, thriving, free and stable Afghanistan.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I join others in thanking the Secretary-General for his report (S/2015/422), Special Representative of the Secretary-General Nicholas Haysom for his briefing and Ambassador Zahir Tanin for his remarks this morning.

I join my Spanish colleague and others in strongly condemning this morning's attack on the Afghan Parliament. The Taliban have claimed responsibility. It was a callous attack. It once again targeted civilians in violation of international humanitarian law. My deepest sympathies go out to all those affected, their families and friends. I should like to pay tribute to the swift and effective response by the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF).

The Taliban will further alienate the Afghan people by such attacks. Afghanistan has clearly demonstrated its commitment to democracy, as the Afghan people courageously turned out to vote in the millions during last year's elections. The United Kingdom will continue to stand alongside all those who seek a more peaceful, prosperous and democratic future for Afghanistan.

After many difficult years and despite such attacks, Afghanistan has now begun its Transformation Decade, with full ownership of its national affairs. The country is moving forward. Cabinet ministers and provincial governors are being appointed, and the National Unity Government has set out an impressive vision for reform at the London Conference. These reforms could have a real impact on day-to-day life in Afghanistan by improving citizens' rights, strengthening accountability and promoting economic growth.

It is vital that this vision now be translated into actions to address Afghanistan's many challenges. The remaining Government appointments should be made swiftly. Reforms should be implemented quickly in order to build a better future for all Afghans. The forthcoming meeting of senior officials from the international community and Afghanistan to be held in September 2015 should take stock of how far the country has come in tackling corruption, strengthening the economy and improving women's rights. That meeting is also a chance to look ahead to the longer-term development of Afghanistan. We hope that it will agree on a refreshed framework between the international community and the Government.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has a crucial role to play throughout this process in support of the Government's reforms. Its continued presence in Afghanistan underlines the international community's commitment.

This year's fighting season and the intensification of armed clashes is testing the capabilities of the ANSF. They are showing that they are capable of meeting this challenge. I pay tribute to their resolve and the sacrifices they are making for the sake of security and stability in Afghanistan.

Let me take this opportunity to reiterate the United Kingdom's commitment to a strong and self-sufficient ANSF. We are proud of our support for the Afghan National Army officer academy, and we will maintain our contribution of $110 million each year to the ANSF until at least 2017.

However, no matter the strength of the ANSF, a political settlement remains the best prospect for bringing peace and stability to Afghanistan. We welcome President Ghani's commitment to a peace process and his efforts to build regional cooperation for a peaceful and stable Afghanistan.

The continued violence experienced by innocent civilians gives us a clear illustration of why a political solution is so vital. The rise in civilian casualties highlighted in the Secretary-General's report is worrying. We deplore the Taliban's large-scale attacks against civilian targets, including Government officials, legal professionals and those participating in

cultural events. These are in stark contrast to Taliban statements on protecting civilians. The time has come for the Taliban to sit down at the negotiating table for the sake of the people of Afghanistan.

Turning to the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, we welcome President Ghani's commitment to making fundamental and sustainable changes for Afghan women. These need to include participation in decision-making and economic empowerment. Despite his commitment, women and girls continue to face significant challenges, including violence against them and against those who defend their rights. We condemn the horrific killing of Farkhunda Malikzada in March. Her death was a tragic reminder of the scale of the challenge facing Afghan women and girls.

There are two immediate steps that the Government of Afghanistan can take to improve the lives of women and girls: first, implement fully the law on the elimination of violence against women, so that the perpetrators of these terrible crimes face justice; secondly, publish soon Afghanistan's national action plan for women and peace and security. We hope it will set a clear framework for improving women's rights across the country.

In highlighting the challenges, we should not lose sight of progress. As my Afghan colleague outlined, Afghanistan now has women running the Ministries of Higher Education, Women's Affairs, Counter Narcotics and Labour and Social Affairs. For the second time in Afghanistan's history, there is a female provincial governor, and only last week, the first female judge was nominated to the Supreme Court and the first female officers graduated from the United Kingdom-supported national officer academy. All of this would have been unthinkable a decade ago. These gains must be protected and further promoted.

Let me close by stressing that we must never forget the sacrifices made by the men and women of Afghanistan and the international community to bring Afghanistan this far. Thanks to their commitment, so much has been achieved over the past 13 years. Life expectancy is rising. Health care is improving. Millions of children — and millions of girls in particular — are now receiving education. Yet as the country moves forward and tackles the challenges that remain, this morning's attack shows that we cannot afford to let international attention to Afghanistan slip. Through this regular debate and through the work of UNAMA, we must maintain our focus.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We wish to thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Zahir Tanin, for their statements.

We join others in condemning today's terrorist attack and would like to fully support the draft press statement presented by the Spanish delegation. The Security Council must present a unified front on the issue of terrorism.

We welcome the fact that the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has launched a new phase in its political process aimed at overcoming the instability caused by the successive foreign interventions of the end of last century, the consequences of which are still making themselves known.

We welcome the firm commitment by the Government and the people of Afghanistan to meet the challenges facing the country with a view to strengthening peace and stability. The formation of the National Unity Government under the leadership of President Ashraf Ghani, who has made national reconciliation his goal, is a highly positive development, as it will allow the country to strengthen its institutions. In that regard, the dialogue initiated with the armed insurgents in order to reach a political agreement for peace is encouraging.

Achieving peace and strengthening the political process will require the full participation of the Afghan people, including women. We therefore welcome the fact that the President has appointed four women to senior positions within the central Administration. We support the participation of women in decision-making in various Government areas to decisively combat the exclusion of women and the violence committed against them in Afghan society.

The holding of parliamentary elections is a pending issue of particular importance for the strengthening of the State. While awaiting the electoral reforms agreed to on 21 September 2014, we encourage the Afghan Government to undertake the necessary efforts to hold those elections.

One of the most important challenges facing the current Government is the economic situation, which presents great challenges, given the devastating effects of war. We therefore urge the international community to provide all necessary assistance to promote sustainable economic and social development in Afghanistan.

We want to highlight the work carried out by UNAMA in terms of peacebuilding. Meetings between Afghan society and various levels of Government aimed at strengthening the people's leadership in the peacebuilding process is a major breakthrough. While recognizing their contributions, we believe that UNAMA should continue its work in full coordination with the Government.

The reintegration of former combatants is one of the most important elements for efforts to build peace and political and social stability and an objective that our country warmly welcomes. In that regard, we recognize the efforts of Afghanistan to reintegrate into society more than 10,000 former combatants, who handed over approximately 7,000 weapons that they had in their possession. Despite that progress, the terrorist threat remains in the form of the presence of foreign terrorist fighters, who, filled with hatred and intolerance, are trying to take Afghanistan back to an earlier time.

The security situation remains fragile, as noted in the report (S/2015/422) of the Secretary-General. Terrorist groups operating in Central Asia persist in their plans to destabilize the region, including Afghanistan. The presence of groups affiliated with cells of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria is another demonstration of the growing threat to regional stability posed by the advance of violent non-State actors. The reports indicate a considerable increase in the number of extremist armed groups in various parts of the country as a result of military operations in neighbouring countries, which represents a new challenge to the stability of Afghanistan. We would like to underscore the importance of the cooperation of neighbouring countries, including Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, which have played an crucial role in providing shelter to Afghan refugees affected by armed violence. We welcome the voluntary repatriation programmes for refugees that those Governments have promoted, with the assistance of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

We are convinced that strengthening the country's armed forces is essential to building the State so that it can effectively combat the various groups linked to terrorism and transnational organized crime operating in the country. It is vital that Afghanistan recovers all its capacites so that it can address all of its issues in a sovereign and independent way.

We also welcome the efforts made by the Afghan authorities to combat the scourge of drugs, although there has been an increase in poppy cultivation. Eradication is one area where there has been considerable progress, despite the resistance of insurgent groups. The cultivation of and trafficking in drugs continues to be a key source of financing for the Taliban and other criminal and terrorist groups.

We are concerned about the increase in the number of attacks on the civilian population as a result of internal conflict. The infant mortality rate has risen as a result of armed clashes, with a high number of cases involving explosives and landmines. We therefore believe that there should be an increase in assistance provided by the international community to help remove such devices, which cause so much harm to civilians, particularly children.

In conclusion, we hope that through a broad and inclusive political process, peace and stability will ultimately take root in Afghanistan. That will require the joint efforts of the Afghan Government and people, with the assistance and support of the international community, in order to overcome the economic and social conditions that fuel extremism and violence.

Ms. Murmokaitė (Lithuania): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Nicholas Haysom, and Ambassador Tanin for their briefings. My delegation expresses its appreciation for all the important work that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the United Nations family are doing in Afghanistan.

Lithuania aligns itself with the statement to be made on behalf of the European Union (EU).

Afghanistan is continuing its difficult transformation towards peace and self-reliance. The deaths, caused by an improvised explosive device, on 21 June of 16 civilians who were returning to their village in the Marja district of Helmand province, and the attempted attack on the Afghan Parliament earlier today, which injured 31 civilians, are only a few of the many reminders of how dramatically challenging the situation remains. We firmly condemn all such attacks. Faced with these daunting challenges, it is essential that the Afghan Government continue demonstrating its firm

determination to end the conflict and improve the lives of its citizens.

We welcome the completion of the Cabinet formation, which, due to the nature of the National Unity Government, was a difficult yet absolutely necessary event. We encourage Afghan leaders to complete pending appointments of officials, including in the justice sector and at the provincial level. The new leaders have delivered on their promise to appoint four women ministers. In addition, President Ghani has nominated the first-ever female Supreme Court judge in Afghanistan. I am sure that they will be a valuable asset to the Government's work and will also have a real impact on the promotion of women's rights across the country.

It is crucial that the Unity Government create an accountable, transparent and effective Government. After decades of corruption and obscure dealings, Afghanistan is in dire need of bold reforms. In that regard, President Ghani's agenda, entitled "Realizing self-reliance", as presented last year in London, is the way forward. The President's initiatives on reviewing Government revenues and spending, formulating 100-day action plans for each ministry and establishing an independent anti-corruption commission are certainly steps in the right direction. It is crucial not to lose momentum and to persevere in their implementation, as such reforms will improve service delivery, increase citizens' participation and strengthen their trust in elected officials.

The need for progress on electoral reform deserves a separate mention. While the establishment of the Special Commission on Electoral Reform provided a mechanism towards enhancing electoral integrity, the Commission has yet to start its work. The current mandate of the lower house of the National Assembly expired and has been extended, but there is still no electoral calendar. That must be urgently addressed, along with the implementation of socioeconomic policies and a development agenda. Counter-narcotics policies should be promoted as well, including through creating incentives for farmers to turn to legal livelihoods.

At the same time, existing security concerns must be addressed, since a continuing lack of security may thwart progress in other areas. As the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/422) shows, the number of civilian casualties in the reporting period increased by almost a quarter compared with that in 2014, continuing the trend of record high numbers. Improvised explosive devices remain the second leading cause of civilian casualties.

The anti-Government elements' spring offensive has been more intensive than the year before, with a 45 per cent increase in armed clashes. We condemn the continuing attacks by anti-Government elements and their deliberate targeting of civilians, including the 13 May Taliban attack on a Kabul guesthouse and on those working in the justice system. We call on all parties to comply with international humanitarian law, which prohibits attacks against civilians. In that regard, it is vital that the Government push forward an Afghan-led reconciliation and peace process.

More needs to be done to protect women's rights and expand their access to justice. Reports estimate that up to 87 per cent of Afghan women have experienced domestic abuse at least once. Domestic violence, coupled with high maternal mortality, a lack of economic rights and limited opportunities for justice, makes Afghanistan one of the world's most dangerous countries for women. The latest UNAMA report on violence against women shows that Afghanistan's court system is failing to provide adequate access for women who are victims of violence. We encourage the Afghan Government to strengthen access to the justice system and increase women's trust in legal proceedings, which are often overshadowed by corrupt practices.

My delegation welcomes the first human-rights dialogue between the European Union and Afghanistan, which took place on 15 June in Kabul. We encourage further discussions, in a cooperative spirit, on ways to improve the human-rights situation in Afghanistan.

The future of Afghanistan depends not only on the Afghans themselves, but also on the actions of their neighbours. A peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan is in the interest of all the countries of the region. Lithuania commends the Government's efforts aimed at improving bilateral relations with its neighbours, including Pakistan, and in multilateral cooperation forums, such as activities carried out under the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process. Any positive steps on peace and stability taken by Afghanistan should be reciprocated with tangible actions by neighbouring countries. To cite some practical examples, from 2012 to 2015 Lithuania provided funding for a regional project involving Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. That initiative contributed to the development of a compatible veterinary control system in the four Asian

countries, in line with international standards and the EU legal framework.

In June 2015, after 13 years of active participation in Afghanistan, the Lithuanian Special Operations Forces completed the longest-ever non-stop Lithuanian international mission abroad. The mission's success was a result of effective cooperation between the Government of Afghanistan and its allies. As a result, the Afghan National Security Forces have gained the useful experience they need to ensure their country's security on their own.

Lithuania remains engaged in the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, which is one of the major commitments of the Alliance in 2015 and 2016. The mission's mandate will end in December 2016. With this in mind, we need to discuss the further engagement of the international community in Afghanistan after 2016. The international community has to continue assisting and supporting Afghanistan as it continues to build a secure and just future. We welcome the establishment of a Tripartite Commission, as per Security Council resolution 2210 (2015), to conduct an examination of the role, structure and activities of all United Nations entities in Afghanistan. We encourage all participants to actively engage in that process.

Mr. Olguín Cigarroa (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the briefings given by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Mr. Nicholas Haysom, and by Ambassador Tanin.

Chile deplores and strongly condemns the attack committed today against the Parliament of Afghanistan and the use of force against unarmed civilians. We would like to recall that it is of the utmost importance that authorities ensure the protection of civilians and prevent anti-Government forces from undermining trust in the new Government and in the democratic process.

The development of a modern, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan will depend, to a large extent, on the success of the process of reconciliation in the framework of a broad-based strategy for the protection and promotion of human rights that envisions access to education, health care and jobs for all Afghans. In order to achieve that, it is crucial that progress achieved by Afghanistan in the area of human rights since 2001 continue in an accelerated and consolidated manner. By the same token, it is imperative to ensure the full and effective participation of women in decision-making processes. Accordingly, we urge the Government of Afghanistan to implement resolution 1325 (2000) and the law on the elimination of violence against women, so as to ensure that the perpetrators of this type of violence are held accountable for their actions. We are concerned about the security situation in Afghanistan and, particularly, the increase in the deaths of Afghan women and children. We hope that the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict quickly reaches a consensus regarding its conclusions and that those are used to provide better protection to children in Afghanistan.

We remain concerned about radical extremism in Afghanistan and the fact that there are approximately 7,180 foreign terrorist fighters in that country, according to estimates by the Ministry of the Interior. We encourage the Government of Afghanistan and neighbouring countries to implement the relevant resolutions of the Security Council in order to slow down the entry of foreign terrorist fighters. Regional and international cooperation is essential in this area, particularly in operations aimed at improving border control. Similarly, it is crucial that the Government prioritize inclusive development in order to address the grievances of disaffected communities. It is vital to implement preventative measures that counter extremist rhetoric and recruitment by terrorists. We would like to reiterate what President Michelle Bachelet said to the Council last January:

> "Social inclusion and inclusive development are the conditions for peace [...]'Over the longer term, the biggest threat to terrorists is not the power of missiles. It is the politics of inclusion [...]. It is education, jobs and real opportunity.'" (*S/PV.7361, pp. 6-7*).

We believe that it is essential to promote dialogue, inclusion and consensus among Afghans, all of which are necessary in building a country capable of standing on its own, with strong democratic institutions and the rule of law. We would like here to reiterate our support for UNAMA's important work in strengthening the country's capabilities. In conclusion, Chile calls once again on the international community to continue its support for the people of Afghanistan and strengthen their capacities, thereby enabling the country to

confront the security and development challenges that it faces.

Mr. Hmoud (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like at the outset to thank Mr. Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing.

Afghanistan is going through a crucial phase in its history. It is facing a series of ongoing, new and renewed challenges. Accordingly, the international community must work towards providing the necessary assistance to this country for a better future for its children. After many years of war, which has torn Afghanistan apart and destroyed its institutions — and during which the country has taken up a great deal of the international community's efforts and attention — the concept of threats to international peace and security and the our way of handling them have changed forever. Today, more than ever, Afghanistan needs the support of the international community and of the United Nations. That is the real challenge that we face in Afghanistan.

Jordan is extremely concerned at the security situation in Afghanistan, exemplified by the terrorist attack against the Parliament of Afghanistan this morning. We recognize the difficulties that the Afghan authorities are facing in maintaining security and controlling the situation. Accordingly, the international community and, particularly, neighbouring countries must continue to provide support to Afghanistan in its war against terrorism, and must support the Government's efforts in controlling the entire national territory. We therefore encourage international partners to reinforce and improve Afghanistan's capacities, in order to adequately address the situation. In the near future, in cooperation with interested countries and the Government of Afghanistan, we must carry out a comprehensive analysis of the situation in determining how the Council can help bolster security and stability in that country.

Jordan welcomes the fact that the formation of the new Afghan Government has been completed in order to maintain the progress achieved thus far through democracy. That ongoing process has seen the involvement of all Afghans, political parties and national partners in Afghanistan. We welcome the formation of this new Government, and we hope that it marks the start of positive change in the political landscape and in the peacebuilding process in Afghanistan.

Resolving differences among the different components within Afghan society, in order to ensure the stability that the country so desires, will not be possible unless there is national reconciliation throughout Afghanistan, led by the Afghans themselves. Because the use of force and violence by different elements will hinder the achievement of those goals, bringing about a comprehensive peace remains a great challenge in the country. Taking that into account, we would stress the importance of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan's (UNAMA) role and that of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in deploying their good offices to strengthen national reconciliation.

We call upon all the parties to participate constructively in that process.

In view of the Afghan President's announcement that the current legislature will be extended until new elections are held, we appeal to the Special Commission on Electoral Reform to start work as soon as possible and implement all the necessary reforms, avoiding the mistakes of the past and thereby guaranteeing that the electoral process will comply with international standards. We hope that the progress made in that area will be presented to the Security Council at its meeting in September. We would like to emphasize once again the need to expedite the implementation of anti-corruption reform programmes so as to ensure that human rights and the rule of law are upheld. We call upon the Government to intensify its efforts to improve the situation of vulnerable and marginalized groups in the country, and we also emphasize that all matters related to women's rights must be an integral part of all debates on peace, so that women can be more involved in future progress.

Jordan is concerned about Afghanistan's poor economic situation, particularly in view of the fragile security conditions following the terrorist attacks, and we trust that the necessary steps will be taken to improve the economic situation so that donors in the international community regain confidence in the country. One of the most important measures will be the struggle against corruption at all levels of the Government, as the United Nations and international financial institutions have reiterated on various occasions. We call upon the Government to assume its responsibilities and reach that goal, and we urge the donor community and countries in the region to continue to support development and invest jointly in Afghanistan. We welcome the efforts of UNAMA,

which is working extremely effectively in various areas under the difficult circumstances in the country, and we encourage it to continue to play that role.

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

I join other Security Council members in thanking the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Nicholas Haysom, and Ambassador Tanin for their briefings. My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to express its appreciation to the leadership and staff members of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their unstinting assistance to the Government and people of Afghanistan.

Malaysia deplores and condemns the heinous attack against the Afghan Parliament building earlier today, responsibility for which has been claimed by the Taliban. We offer our condolences and deepest sympathy to the families and loved ones of those killed. Malaysia would emphasize that the only way forward is through peaceful political negotiations. Despite the attack, we hope that Afghanistan will stay the course in finalizing the formation of a National Unity Government based on a power-sharing framework. From our own experience of nation-building through power-sharing and social transformation, we fully understand the importance of mutual respect and inclusiveness in such matters.

Malaysia looks forward to having all parties support the implementation of the agenda set by President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah. It is therefore our hope that those efforts will demonstrate the strong commitment of the Afghan people and Government to an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned decade of transformation. Malaysia reiterates its support for the Afghan Government's efforts to achieve peace and reconciliation, and we are heartened by the extensive engagement between President Ghani and his local and regional interlocutors. We further welcome the progress made in instituting electoral reforms and urge the Government to remain steadfast in introducing those and other reforms.

In our view, the sustained positive atmosphere in the region has become a catalyst for a more open and constructive discourse, and we call on all parties to continue to support that vital process. Key stakeholders in the region should also intensify their efforts to support and assist Afghanistan, including through more substantive dialogues in such regional and multilateral cooperation forums as the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process.

While encouraged by the significant progress on the political front, Malaysia notes that the security situation remains precarious, as seen earlier today. Malaysia joins other Council members in expressing concern at the high number of civilian casualties in the armed conflict, and we also strongly condemn the deliberate targeting of civilians. It is deeply deplorable that Afghan children continue to bear the brunt of the violent conflict in the country, either through being caught in the crossfire or through being caught in attacks with improvised explosive devices or contact with explosive remnants of war. We call on all parties undertaking ground engagements to comply with international humanitarian law and commit to the protection of civilians, including women and children. In that regard, my delegation takes note of the Afghan Government's progress report on its compliance with the action plan it adopted pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005) on children and armed conflict.

We are also concerned by the large number of foreign fighters present in Afghanistan, including those associated with terrorist groups. My delegation further notes that that presence has been a matter of great concern for countries in the region as well, particularly in Central Asia. While there may be an absence of hard evidence to prove that certain terrorist and extremist groups are operating in Afghanistan, that should not prevent us from addressing the root causes of the support for such groups.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the United Nations, the Security Council and the rest of the international community should continue to lend their support, encouragement and assistance to Afghanistan through reconstruction and redevelopment efforts designed to rebuild the country. As a friend and partner of Afghanistan, Malaysia remains committed to supporting the Afghan Government in its efforts to achieve peace, security and stability.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Mukerji (India): At the outset, I would like to express our strong condemnation of this morning's terrorist attack on the Afghan Parliament and express our solidarity with the people and Government of Afghanistan at this hour. Madam President, we thank

your delegation for organizing this debate on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I would also like to thank the Secretary General for his report on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2015/422), his Special Representative, Nicholas Haysom, and Ambassador Zahir Tanin for their briefings earlier this morning.

The President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, paid a State visit to India from 27 to 29 April. That visit further cemented the age-old historical, cultural and geographical links between India and Afghanistan. The leaders of our two countries acknowledged that those links today provide the solid foundation for our strategic partnership, which was in turn forged on the two countries' common perception of challenges and shared interests. Prime Minister Modi of India assured the President of Afghanistan of India's abiding support for Afghanistan's ongoing crucial transitions — political, economic and security — for the decade 2015-2024 and beyond.

I wish, however, to express our concern at the security situation in Afghanistan, as set out in the latest report of the Secretary-General, which mentions that the number of armed clashes has risen by 45 per cent since 2014. The report also highlights the fact that 71 per cent of the violence has been concentrated in the southern, south-eastern and eastern regions of the country. Those statistics are a matter of concern for India and the international community. They only reinforce our view that terrorism, not tribal differences or ethnic rivalries, is the main source of insecurity and instability in Afghanistan. That spurt in violence is taking place at a time when Afghanistan is in the midst of a sensitive and historic political transition under the leadership of President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah. Given the critical phase that the political transition is in, and the deteriorating security situation, we feel that there is a strong case for ensuring that the international community takes a fresh look at the manner in which the drawdown of the international military presence in Afghanistan is being planned.

We have also noted with concern the Secretary-General's reference to an Afghan Ministry of Interior estimate that nearly 7,200 so-called foreign fighters are now in Afghanistan. It is obvious that they could not have entered Afghanistan or continued to sustain their terror attacks there without support from beyond the country's borders. President Ghani has taken exceptional steps to launch a reconciliation process to bring peace to his country. Sadly, those efforts are being repeatedly rebuffed by the Taliban and its supporters.

India will continue to support a truly Afghan-led and Afghan-owned reconciliation process within the framework of the Afghan Constitution and the internationally accepted red lines.

I would also like to once again reiterate the importance that we attach to enhancing Afghanistan's economic connectivity to markets in the region. Afghanistan's unique location makes it a natural land bridge for connecting the people and markets of Central Asia to rapidly growing regions in South Asia and beyond. India has been taking steps to help achieve that connectivity. We have indicated our willingness to join an expanded Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan trade and transit agreement; we are working with the Government of Iran to see how the port of Chabahar in Iran could be used to provide Afghanistan with another way of accessing a sea route; and we have unilaterally offered Afghanistan access to the facilities of the integrated checkpoint at Attari at the Wagah-Attari border-crossing point on the international border between India and Pakistan.

Finally, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan must continue to play a leading role in shaping and coordinating the international community's efforts to support Afghanistan's political and economic transition. We are ready to be part of that process, and we look forward to further discussions of UNAMA's continued activities in Afghanistan.

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

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): I would like to start by thanking Special Representative Nicholas Haysom for his perceptive briefing.

Today Afghanistan stands on the cusp of challenge and opportunity. Its path into the Transformation Decade is challenging on every front, dealing as it must with insecurity, economic fragility and the illicit economy, to name only a few issues. We are encouraged to see that the process of forming a Government has been completed, and we also welcome the nomination of the first woman to the country's Supreme Court. All of that marks an auspicious beginning. But much more needs to be done, and as Afghanistan negotiates its many challenges, the international community must

continue to stand by it. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has a critical role in that regard. Its work, in line with the priorities set by the Afghan Government, is much valued. All of us have a crucial stake in the stability of Afghanistan, and all of us will have to contribute to that end.

As is noted in the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/422), during the last quarter, we travelled further along a positive trajectory of enhanced engagement between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Last month, my Prime Minister visited Kabul for the second time, his first since the advent of the Government of National Unity. The two leaders agreed that our bilateral relationship would continue to be guided by three core principles, the first being adherence to the policy of non-interference; the second, ensuring that our respective territories are not used against each other; and the third, seeing to it that the enemies of Afghanistan are treated as enemies of Pakistan, and vice versa. The two leaders also agreed to expand trade and deepen regional cooperation, which we hope will usher in a new era of peace and development in our region — a win-win situation for everyone.

Pakistan has the highest possible stake in a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. Terrorism remains a challenge for both our countries and the entire region. We have roundly condemned the recent rise in violence in Afghanistan and the civilian casualties that have been its grim consequence. Nothing justifies the killing of innocent people, the atrocious attack this morning on the Afghan Parliament or, as we saw last week, the destruction of hospitals. We are committed to fighting that menace together and are increasing our military and intelligence cooperation with Kabul. For our part, we have just completed a successful first year for our military operation against terrorists and armed militants in North Waziristan. We are committed to eliminating all terrorists, without distinction. And let me be clear that we will be relentless in rooting out terrorism, whoever its sponsors are, external or internal. Any attempt to destabilize parts of our country or attack its territorial integrity will be responded to forcefully.

Pakistan can and will play a constructive role in promoting peace and security in Afghanistan. That can best be achieved through a process of national reconciliation undertaken and led by the Afghans themselves. We welcome the first tentative steps taken in recent months to advance the reconciliation process, and we hope they will lead to direct talks as well as to a de-escalation of violence. Pakistan will do everything possible to encourage that process. Success will require reciprocal accommodation and, above all, strategic patience.

Sustainable peace in Afghanistan will lead to regional stability, which is the cornerstone of the Heart of Asia process. As co-Chair of the process, Pakistan hosted a meeting of its senior officials in Islamabad in May, providing an opportunity for in-depth discussions on a range of issues, including trans-regional projects such as the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

The Secretary-General's report notes an increase in the voluntary return of Afghan refugees from both Pakistan and Iran. However, Pakistan continues to be one of the top two countries hosting the world's largest refugee population. We welcome the Afghan Government's commitment to the refugees' return and reintegration and hope that UNAMA will continue to assist in that regard. My Prime Minister has assured President Ghani that Afghan refugees will not be forcibly repatriated.

The Secretary-General's report also states that opiates still account for the equivalent of 13 per cent of Afghanistan's gross domestic product. While we welcome efforts by the Afghan law-enforcement authorities to counter that menace, more focused action is required, with international support.

Finally, the ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan transcend the boundaries of time and space. Our destinies are intertwined. As our Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said in Kabul, "We have stood shoulder to shoulder through every trial and tribulation" that the people of Afghanistan have faced. I would therefore like to assure Afghanistan of our continued resolve to remain by its side and help the Afghan people in whatever way we can to accomplish the goals of the Transformation Decade and achieve lasting peace.

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

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): We align ourselves with the statement to be delivered later on behalf of the European Union, and particularly with its emphasis on the need for electoral reform in Afghanistan, which is fundamental for safeguarding the country's growing political participation and stronger civil society. In addition, I would like to make a few remarks.

First of all, of course, we firmly condemn the attack on the Parliament in Kabul, which is an attack on democracy. Our support for those building a democratic and peaceful Afghanistan must be unwavering.

I would like to thank Nicholas Haysom, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and his staff for his briefing and for the work they are doing on the ground; I also thank Ambassador Tanin for his remarks. Sweden takes particular note of the horrific effects of the conflict on the civilian population that their statements highlight. The continuing rise in civilian casualties is deplorable and worrying.

It has been said many times before, particularly in this Chamber, that this is a critical year for Afghanistan and the Afghan people. It is also a critical year for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The reduced presence of international security forces in the country and the upcoming review of the UNAMA mandate give us a unique chance to strengthen it in the areas where it can have the greatest effect in the years ahead, including ensuring broad geographical outreach to Afghanistan and a meaningful and successful peace process.

Our support for UNAMA remains strong. We would like to express our gratitude to the women and men employed by UNAMA in Kabul as well as in Afghanistan's more remote provinces. The importance of an ambitious presence on the part of the international community, particularly in remote areas of the country, cannot be stressed enough. The situation demands that the international community speak and act as one. Effective multilateral cooperation and coordination within the framework of the United Nations remain vital.

The recent and reprehensible spiral of attacks on aid workers operating in Afghanistan is appalling. We are currently witnessing a shrinking of the humanitarian space on a large and devastating scale, where aid workers are being prevented from providing basic humanitarian aid or seeking sustainable solutions for the Afghan people. In order to stop that trend from having severe and long-term effects and to end the brutal and pointless violence, humanitarian access must be regained and the safety of aid workers guaranteed.

The conflict can be solved only through peaceful and meaningful dialogue. A peace process must be carefully planned and implemented. There is no room for compromise on the principles, rights and freedoms that have already been agreed on and that are enshrined in the Afghan Constitution. A successful peace process should be inclusive and representative. Excluding segments of the Afghan population, such as women, from taking part would compromise the very foundation of a peaceful society. We therefore call for the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and for the Afghan Government to continue to pursue and safeguard women's full enjoyment of human rights. An inclusive and meaningful peace process has the potential to be transformative in enabling Afghans to believe in an Afghanistan that can fully meet their legitimate aspirations for a more prosperous and secure life.

In 2001, we, the world, were uniquely united around the idea of building a stable future for Afghanistan. In the 14 years since, the world has become more unruly in many ways. There are more conflicts demanding the attention of the international community than ever. Although a lot has been achieved in Afghanistan, much remains to be done. It is therefore important that we reaffirm our support for Afghanistan and honour our commitments. At the same time, there must also be tangible reforms and progress within the country. The road map for the way ahead has already been agreed on, most notably in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework and in the Afghan Government's reform paper "Realizing self-reliance".

Sweden's support for Afghanistan has been substantial and long-term. It began several decades ago, and it will continue with our commitment of $1.2 billion throughout the Transformation Decade. The Afghan Government and people can count on our continued support in this critical time, a time for reforms, for keeping commitments made and realizing self-reliance.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the delegation of the European Union.

Mr. Mayr-Harting: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine and Armenia, align themselves with this statement.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2015/422) and Special

Representative Haysom for his briefing. I would also like to assure Mr. Haysom of our continued strong support for his important mission, and to thank Ambassador Tanin for his statement.

At the outset, let me reiterate how strongly we condemn today's horrendous terrorist attack in Kabul. We offer our heartfelt condolences to the Government and people of Afghanistan and to the families of the victims. I would also like to reiterate the European Union's full support for the continuing role played by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and all United Nations agencies in supporting the Afghan people and coordinating the international community's assistance. The role of the United Nations in helping the National Unity Government to implement its priorities remains vitally important, not least by ensuring that Afghans across the country are able to benefit from the Government's programmes and the international assistance to them.

The Secretary-General's report highlights the continued callous disregard by the Taliban and other insurgent groups for Afghan lives, of which the tragic and dramatic events of this day are only the most recent horrendous example. Despite empty protestations to the contrary, the insurgency continues to plan and target attacks against Afghan civilians. That has unfortunately led to record numbers of Afghan civilians being killed. The European Union continues to support the initiation of an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process. But it must be a peace that leads to a cessation of violence, as well as ending any links with terrorism and, importantly, respecting the rights of Afghans set out in the Constitution, notably the rights of women and girls.

The vision for reform set out by the National Unity Government in its "Realizing self-reliance" paper at the London Conference in December 2014 offers a comprehensive programme that the European Union is pleased to endorse and support. The European Union welcomes the near-completion of the formation of the National Unity Government, which must now urgently develop a prioritized plan for undertaking the critical reforms that Afghanistan needs in order to consolidate the progress made to date and provide a foundation for future gains. In particular, the Government must look at immediate measures that can increase economic confidence, generate revenue and enable the Special Commission on Electoral Reform to really begin its work, which is to study how the current electoral system can be reformed. Those measures are vital for the political and economic stability that Afghanistan needs in order to make progress in addressing long-standing societal issues. They include the prevalence of corruption and the threats posed by drugs and organized crime, the lack of the rule of law, as exemplified by the dysfunctionality of the justice system, and the continued shame of the mistreatment of women and children.

The European Union calls for those issues to serve as the basis for a refreshed Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF), to which both the Government and the international community committed at the London Conference. The upcoming senior officials' meeting in Kabul will provide a clear opportunity for the Government to substantiate and prioritize the vision that President Ghani Ahmadzai outlined in London, generating a specific programme for reform set out in a refreshed TMAF with which all Afghans can identify. That Framework can be the basis for the continued exceptional levels of assistance provided by the international community, including the European Union and its member States. The European Union encourages Afghanistan to continue the active engagement with its regional partners shown during the past three months, given that regional cooperation is a driver of stability and prosperity not only for Afghanistan but also for the region at large.

In conclusion, the legitimate aspirations of Afghans for greater prosperity and stability in Afghanistan cannot be beholden to the whims of insurgent groups. The EU will work with and support the National Unity Government in establishing a reform programme that addresses the critical issues that continue to be barriers to progress in Afghanistan. This remains a situation in which the United Nations will continue to be vitally important in supporting the Government's plans, and I reiterate the European Union's ongoing support for the role of UNAMA.

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

Mr. Okamura (Japan): Allow me to express my gratitude to Malaysia for convening this important meeting. I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Nicholas Haysom, for his comprehensive briefing. We are grateful to him and his dedicated team for the laudable work they carry out under difficult circumstances. I would also like to thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin of Afghanistan for his statement.

We strongly condemn the attack on the Afghan Parliament this morning. We reiterate our solidarity with the people of Afghanistan and express our heartfelt sympathies to the victims of that crime and their families.

When tens of millions of Afghan men and women took to the polls last year, we knew that Afghanistan's path to self-reliance would present vast opportunities and important challenges. As we approach the half-year mark of Afghanistan's Transformation Decade, we see signs of both.

The National Unity Government is near completion and is strengthening economic and political ties with regional and international partners. On the other hand, economic growth remains weak. We are also witnessing an alarming uptick in violence, which has claimed the lives of a record number of civilians. A strong and inclusive political leadership is needed to overcome these security challenges and pave the way for economic sustainability.

In the light of that situation, we are concerned that electoral reform has not yet commenced. Furthermore, it is disconcerting that the schedule of parliamentary elections, which were to take place before 21 May, according to the Afghan Constitution, has yet to be decided on.

Cognizant of the fact that political certainty underpins security and economic growth, we call for the timely implementation of electoral reforms and parliamentary elections. We likewise look to the Government led by President Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah to accelerate its reform process and address the immediate challenges, including corruption, security and the economy. As Afghanistan works towards peace, prosperity and self-reliance, we consider the following issues to be of continued importance: strengthening governance, advancing political reconciliation and cementing the foundations of a sustainable economy.

First, as Afghanistan takes its first steps towards self-reliance, we see that the resolve and capabilities of the Government are being tested. To that effect, we welcome the fact that Afghanistan is making efforts to strengthen governance. Of particular relevance is the fight against corruption, which includes the judiciary and local governments. As the Afghan Government has rightly noted, corruption raises the costs of development and damages its credibility in the eyes of its people.

We are also alarmed by the security situation and the record high number of civilian casualties on the ground, including in the northern provinces of Kunduz and Badakhstan. We likewise note with concern the presence of foreign fighters in the country. However, we remain confident that Afghanistan's law-enforcement and security forces are up to the task. To that end, Japan will continue to assist Afghanistan to strengthen its law-enforcement capacity, principally through the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan, to which Japan has hitherto contributed more than $1 billion. Our assistance has helped Afghanistan double the size of its police force in four years. Furthermore, knowing that effective law enforcement is contingent upon capable and dedicated individuals, Japan has been providing capacity-building in fields as diverse as literacy education and legal training. For example, Japan, in cooperation with Turkey and NATO, is currently providing assistance for the training of 325 female police officers in Turkey, in the light of the importance of protecting women's rights.

Secondly, political reconciliation is part and parcel of Afghanistan's long-term stability. In that regard, we welcome the Government's engagement with national and regional actors in promoting reconciliation. Furthermore, we welcome the facilitation by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan of civil society-led dialogue towards that end. Japan, for its part, has been supporting the peaceful reintegration of ex-combatants into Afghan society. As a leading contributor to the Afghanistan peace and reintegration programme and other efforts, Japan has contributed to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of approximately 60,000 ex-combatants, the disbandment of 737 armed groups and the collection of 276,000 weapons. Japan looks forward to further progress and to the consolidation of Afghanistan's democratic path to peace and prosperity.

Thirdly, economic opportunity and growth are legitimate aspirations for all Afghans. We are therefore concerned by the economic slowdown, which, among other factors, has been attributed to political and security uncertainties. Nonetheless, the long-term drivers of growth, particularly human capital and economic connectivity, are encouraging. Through assistance from Japan and the international community, the number of schoolchildren has increased nine-fold, to 9.2 million in 12 years. Concerning economic connectivity, we have helped lay more than 700 kilometres of new trunk roads that stretch throughout

the country. Kabul International Airport, rehabilitated with Japan's assistance, has increased passenger traffic by 150 per cent in a span of five years. Furthermore, on 2 June, quite recently, Japan approved the disbursement of $25 million in counterpart funds to help the Afghan Government to conclude a civil airspace management contract. Furthermore, Japan, in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, among others, is also working to strengthen productivity in agriculture, which is the largest source of employment in the country. In order to maximize the economic potential with which Afghanistan is endowed, we look to the Government to implement its reform programme entitled "Realizing self-reliance" to address fiscal vulnerabilities and improve security and political stability.

To conclude, Japan and the international community will stand by Afghanistan as it overcomes its initial challenges and cements its foundations towards self-reliance. We acknowledge and welcome the fact that a Tripartite Commission with the participation of donor countries has been set up to examine the role, structure and activities of all United Nations entities in Afghanistan. Regardless of its form, Japan would like to reaffirm its strong solidarity with the Afghan people and its firm commitment to assisting that country on its path towards peace, prosperity and self-reliance under the principle of mutual accountability.

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

Mr. Eler (Turkey): I would like start by strongly condemning the heinous terrorist attack perpetrated against the Afghan Parliament today. We express our feelings of solidarity with the Government and the people of Afghanistan and underline once again that Turkey stands by Afghanistan in its struggle against terrorism.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2015/422), and his Special Representative, Mr. Nicholas Haysom, and Ambassador Zahir Tanin for their briefings.

We welcome the completion of the formation of the Cabinet in Afghanistan and reiterate our wish for success to the National Unity Government. Afghanistan has achieved significant progress in every field for the last 13 years. In order to maintain those achievements and continue to build upon them, the international community's continuing support to Afghanistan, especially during the Transformation Decade, is of great importance. We believe that the withdrawal of the international presence from Afghanistan should not be calendar-based, but condition-based.

Turkey fully supports the Afghan Government in its efforts to bring peace, stability and prosperity to Afghanistan. The peace and reconciliation process is of utmost importance for achieving lasting peace and stability in that country. We hope that Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation efforts yield positive results.

Turkey's commitment to Afghanistan is long-term. We make comprehensive contributions to Afghanistan both at the bilateral level and through the United Nations and NATO. In the field of security, Turkey assumed framework-nation responsibility for the Kabul region within NATO's Resolute Support Mission. Furthermore, as of 1 January, we took on the management and security responsibilities for the Kabul International Airport for two years.

We have confirmed our pledge of $60 million to the Afghan national defence and security forces for the period from 2015 to 2017, and have already put the first year's commitment into effect. The Turkish armed forces have trained some 17,500 Afghan National Army personnel since 2001. Furthermore, to date a total of 1,956 Afghan police cadets have been trained in four six-month programmes, and 494 Afghan policewomen cadets have also been trained in similar programmes. Additionally, a total of 1,374 Afghan police cadets were trained at the centre attached to the Wardak provincial reconstruction team, until it ceased to function. In addition, Turkey organized 82 specialized training programmes for Afghan law-enforcement officials on various law-enforcement subjects, including counter-narcotics, and plans to continue to do so.

Our development aid programme for the Afghan people is the most comprehensive such programme directed to another country in Turkey's history. Through it, Turkey has completed around 800 projects in Afghanistan, valued at more than $300 million, since 2001, and has done so in every province of Afghanistan without giving priority to any particular ethnic group. We have also committed $150 million to development efforts in Afghanistan for the period from 2015 to 2017. With respect to humanitarian assistance, we have completed 51 projects worth $1.7 million.

Lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan can be possible only within a regional framework that taps the positive energy and increased cooperation within its region. On that understanding, Turkey will continue to support dialogue between Afghanistan and its neighbours. We look forward to the next ministerial meeting of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, to be held in Islamabad. While we welcome the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2015/422), we would like to complement the section on regional cooperation by adding that within the Istanbul Process, Turkey, as co-leader of the counter-terrorism confidence-building measures section, organized a three-day course on defence against suicide bombing in Ankara in April 2015. Turkey will continue to carry out similar activities within the Process.

In conclusion, I would like to underline that we will continue to contribute to the security, development and capacity-building efforts of Afghanistan.

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

Mr. Braun (Germany): To start with, let me join those who have thanked the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Mr. Nicholas Haysom, for his comprehensive briefing today. I would also like to thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin for his statement.

Germany aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union earlier in this debate.

Last year, Afghanistan successfully held presidential elections, resulting in the first peaceful and democratic transfer of power in the country's often painful history. Those elections eventually led to the formation of a National Unity Government. As the legislative term of the Afghan Parliament ends today, we strongly encourage the Government to continue consolidating Afghan democracy and set a concrete timeline for parliamentary and provincial-council elections to be held in a timely manner.

It is of the utmost importance that the Afghan people have their confidence and trust in democratic election processes restored. The pending electoral reforms have the potential to strengthen the election system's credibility and sustainability. They should be based on a broad political consensus that includes the various political camps as well as civil society. In that context, we welcome the establishment of the Special Commission on Election Reform and urge it to assume its duties as quickly as possible. A fully operational legislative body alongside an efficient National Unity Government is a prerequisite for tackling the many issues facing Afghanistan and for building on the country's numerous achievements of the past decade.

Now is the time to implement the ambitious reform strategy, presented by President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah under the title "Realizing self-reliance", for the benefit of the Afghan people. Refreshing the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework will be the cornerstone of that process. The Government is currently working with its partners to set out new priorities that can put Afghanistan firmly on a path of self-reliance, and that process must continue. One already certain result is that the international community will abide by its commitments and continue to support Afghanistan during its Transformation Decade. At the London Conference on Afghanistan held last December, Germany renewed its commitment to maintaining its extraordinary level of civilian assistance, amounting to almost $500 million annually up to 2016.

The United Nations and its funds and programmes, and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, will continue to play a vital role in the implementation of Afghanistan's policy and development priorities. As the role of the United Nations may evolve over time, we welcome the establishment of the Tripartite Commission, as mandated in resolution 2210 (2015). Any recommendation that can improve the effectiveness of the cooperation between the Afghan Government, the United Nations and donor countries will benefit the Afghan people and is therefore welcome.

The current tragic record level of civilian casualties is of great concern. As the Taliban and other armed groups continue to deliberately target civilians, including women, children and those actively advocating for the rights of these most vulnerable groups, it is the civilian population that pays the price for the armed conflict. Today's attack on the Parliament building, disrupting the confirmation process for the Acting Minister of Defence, is a stark reminder of the Taliban's outrageous actions. Our thoughts are with the victims' families.

In closing, I would like to say that an Afghan-led and -owned peace process that upholds the gains in human rights that have been made over the past decade, in particular the rights of women, is key to alleviating the suffering of the civilian population. We therefore

fully support such a peace process and the instrumental role that the United Nations will play in it.

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

Ms. Wilson (Australia): I would also like to thank Special Representative Nicholas Haysom for his briefing and to acknowledge Permanent Representative Zahir Tanin's continuing contribution.

After nine months in office, the National Unity Government has committed to an ambitious reform programme. Its release of the 100-day plans for ministries has shown the global community and the Afghan people the scope of the reform agenda. Australia congratulates Afghanistan and its Government on that initiative and urges them to continue to display determination in carrying out reforms. Since taking over responsibility for providing security for Afghanistan, we note that the Afghan national defence and security forces have demonstrated profound courage, resilience and commitment to the protection of their country and people. But while they are performing strongly against a persistent insurgency, we can also expect the Taliban to continue its campaign of fear. Along with others before us, we condemn today's attack on the Parliament in Kabul and reaffirm our strong support for Afghanistan's legitimate institutions. It is vital that the national forces continue to build their capabilities, particularly in provincial areas, and Australia is providing $300 million between 2015 and 2017 towards that aim.

Among other things, Afghanistan's economy and its Government's finances remain key concerns for Australia. Economic sustainability is key to achieving self-reliance, and we therefore welcome the Afghan Government's focus on improving revenue generation, rationalizing spending and defeating corruption, which must be a major priority. Everything that can be done in that area will not only benefit the Afghan economy, it will also build trust between the Afghan people and the Government.

We see 2015 as the start of a critical decade for Afghan women and girls. We support the National Unity Government's efforts to protect and build on the gains of the past 14 years, which include the enrolment of more than 3 million girls in school and women's increased participation in Afghan political life. Australia also welcomes the recent appointment of four women to ministerial roles and the nomination of the first-ever woman to the Supreme Court. We urge President Ghani Ahmadzai and Chief Executive Abdullah to continue to draw women into political life, which will help not only Afghanistan's women and girls but also the economy and society as a whole.

As others have noted, achieving a political settlement with the Taliban will be necessary if Afghanistan and the region are to find lasting peace. The National Unity Government has made good progress in strengthening its regional relationships, which is a critical first step. We urge Afghanistan and its partners to continue to approach reconciliation with a sense of purpose and pragmatism and to involve Afghan women in pivotal discussions on Afghanistan's future.

A sustainable future for Afghanistan must have strong and sustainable democratic foundations. We continue to urge the Afghan Government to prioritize electoral reform so as to ensure that future elections provide a sound foundation that can enable democracy to mature.

Australia looks forward to continuing its work with the Afghan Government, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and our international partners in order to help the people of Afghanistan deal with the challenges they face in the areas of security, the economy, governance, human rights and human development.

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

Ms. Samson (Netherlands): The Netherlands aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union. I am grateful to the Secretary-General for his detailed and thorough report (S/2015/422) and would also like to thank Special Representative Haysom for his briefing and Ambassador Tanin for his statement.

The latest report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) describes the sharp increase in armed clashes in a number of provinces resulting from the Taliban's spring offensive. The Kingdom of the Netherlands offers its condolences to the Afghan Government on the lives that have been lost in that offensive and in this morning's attack on the Afghan Parliament in Kabu, a stark reminder of the threat that Afghan civilians face on a daily basis. The Netherlands strongly condemns that heinous assault, which, apart from the devastation

and loss of human lives it has brought, is also an attack on the democratic process in Afghanistan.

The Afghan national defence and security forces have been able to push back the insurgents, but Taliban pressure remains high in several provinces. In the long run, lasting stability and peace can be possible only through reconciliation. It is therefore laudable that the National Unity Government has taken the initiative to enter into peace talks with the Taliban. Important first steps have been taken. The Netherlands supports the National Unity Government's regional approach. We also hope to see the meaningful participation of Afghan women in the peace talks. Peace is essential for any further development in Afghanistan.

The National Unity Government presented its ambitious reform agenda, "Realizing self-reliance", during the London Conference. Since then, its appointment of a full Cabinet has progressed slowly but steadily. However, with that now almost complete, we hope to soon be able to see reforms come to fruition.

The Netherlands is looking forward to a draft of the refreshed Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework in the run-up to the senior officials' meeting in Kabul on 5 September. The Framework should include the agreements from the 2012 Tokyo Declaration on Afghanistan, the Government's reform agenda and the various ministries' 100-day action plans.

As the UNAMA report highlights, the National Unity Government is committed to sustainably improving the lives of women in Afghanistan. It has made some significant progress in furthering human rights, including women's rights, since its formation, for example by prohibiting the recruitment of children by the military and police forces and by addressing corruption within the justice sector, as well as through its nomination of the first female Supreme Court judge. Continued commitment is vital. The Netherlands is looking forward to the presentation of the Afghan national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000) and to the 100-day action plan of the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

The Netherlands has been a long-time partner of Afghanistan, with a relationship stretching back more than a decade. We have been contributing in the area of security in the provinces of Baghlan, Uruzgan and Kunduz, and currently in Balkh province. Since 2002, Afghanistan has been one of our most important partners in development cooperation, particularly in the areas of the rule of law, reconstruction and gender. We have been a trusted contributor to the World Bank's Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, supporting Afghan economic development, education, health care and governmental capacities. The Netherlands also contributes troops to NATO's Resolute Support Mission for training, advising and assisting in northern Afghanistan and Mazar-e-Sharif. We have sent staff to the European Union Police Mission training effort and to UNAMA, and we will continue to support the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police.

As our Minister for Foreign Affairs said at the London Conference, the Netherlands will stand by the Afghan people in the years to come. Our continued support must go hand in hand with critical and meaningful reforms within the Afghan Government, as agreed on in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, so that self-reliance can indeed be achieved in this new era of increased Afghan ownership and leadership.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to underline the continued support of the Netherlands for the role played by UNAMA, and to thank it for its ongoing constructive role in coordinating the international community's efforts and fulfilling its political mandate.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to express my appreciation to you, Madam President, for holding this debate on the situation in Afghanistan. I would also like to thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), for his briefing.

I offer my condolences to the people and Government of Afghanistan for the losses they have incurred in the terrorist attacks carried out by the Taliban against them, including the attack on Parliament that took place earlier today.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has always supported peace, stability, security and socioeconomic development in Afghanistan and considers that country's security tantamount to security within its own borders. Our policy of steadfast support for the Afghan Government has not changed, and will not. We are confident that the National Unity Government is

best positioned to face the major challenges to peace and development in Afghanistan, and in that regard we will spare no effort in lending it our support.

Once again, unfortunately, the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2015/422) indicates a deterioration in the country's security situation, describing an increase in armed attacks and violence that is 6 per cent higher than in the same period in 2014 and 45 per cent higher than in 2013. Those figures should be a matter of grave concern to all of us in the region and beyond. Insecurity, instability and poverty continue to provide fertile ground for the continued presence in Afghanistan of violent extremist groups such as the Taliban and Al-Qaida, as well as of the more recently emerged Daesh and other foreign terrorist fighters, as the Secretary-General mentions in the report.

Unfortunately, the report also indicates that the number of terrorist actions has increased. We regard activities by all violent extremists in Afghanistan as a security threat to Iran and the whole region. Iran has always condemned all violent attacks committed by terrorist groups, and we reject any cooperation with them, since we believe that would be counterproductive in establishing peace in Afghanistan.

On bilateral cooperation, Iran hosted President Ghani on 19 and 20 April for his first official visit to Iran and meetings with Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani, during which the two countries pledged greater cooperation in the areas of security information-sharing, counter-narcotics operations, the sharing of water resources, and refugees. The two presidents also underlined their determination to cooperate in fighting extremism and terrorism throughout the region by eliminating those menaces.

In the view of the Iranian Government, trade and transit are two main fields that are ripe for expansion in Tehran-Kabul relations. The railroad project between Herat and the city of Khaf in Iran and Iran's readiness to make its port facilities in Chahbahar available to Afghanistan are two major and ongoing projects in that field. As Afghanistan is a landlocked country, it is agreed that those two projects are very important. We need to move forward with those activities in the framework of the tripartite agreement between India, Afghanistan and Iran as soon as possible.

On counter-narcotics efforts, we are particularly concerned about the reports indicating an increase in opium-poppy cultivation in Afghanistan during recent years. It is a real warning sign for the region and beyond. That threat should be addressed by the international community in a very serious manner. In that regard, we welcome the regional initiatives taken by the countries of the region, including China, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Iran, to combat the production and transfer of narcotics. At the same time, strong support and commitment by the international donors, Afghan authorities and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is essential in order to deter the menace of drug cultivation and drug trafficking. Illicit drugs are not only a major social and public-health challenge, but also, and more importantly, a main source of income for extremist and terrorist groups. Therefore, the international community should provide special support to the triangular cooperation initiative on countering narcotics agreed by Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. That is a useful initiative that will benefit Afghanistan as well as transit and destination countries.

Afghan refugees continue to live in Iran. Voluntary repatriations of Afghan refugees and undocumented Afghans must be supported through efforts to meet the reasonable needs of repatriated and repatriating refugees in Afghanistan, with a view to enabling them to be permanently reintegrated into their home country. That underscores the need to mobilize more international support to ensure the success of repatriation efforts.

We support UNAMA and United Nations agencies in their efforts to providing development and reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan through robust regional engagement. UNAMA should be further strengthened, given its unique role and multifaceted functions vis-à-vis the important political and socioeconomic challenges facing Afghanistan.

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

Mr. Grant (Canada): Today we awoke to news of the Afghan Parliament, the seat of Afghan democracy, being under assault by gunmen. Those terrorists killed Afghan civilians but were denied the ability to murder Afghan legislators thanks to the brave efforts of Afghan security forces. On this day, when Afghanistan was to confirm its newest Defence Minister through its own elected Parliament, the militants continued to wage their war against the Afghan people. Yet they were not alone.

They came from somewhere. They were sheltered, trained, sponsored and deployed. In the face of such violence, Canada continues to stand with the Afghan people, the vast majority of whom choose modernity and progress and reject terrorism and corruption.

With the appointment of a full Cabinet, save for one minister, the formation of the Afghan National Unity Government of President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah is almost complete. Attention can now turn to securing Afghanistan's stability and sustainability. We understand the complexities of working within the national unity structure, but a Government must govern and provide basic services to its citizenry within its territory. While many issues must wait for security conditions to improve, others can and should be addressed without delay. Central to that, we encourage the President and the Chief Executive to work together and ensure effective implementation of vital reforms aimed at eradicating corruption, improving governance, reducing poverty, strengthening the economy, protecting human rights — especially the rights of women and girls — and improving participation in politics and society, particularly as they concern women and minority groups.

We also urge the National Unity Government to embark on meaningful electoral reform in order to restore the people's faith in democracy and representational government. The absence of reform is what has caused the delay in the parliamentary elections. We welcome the fact that the term length for the lower house of Parliament will be prolonged so as to maintain its legitimacy and constitutionality.

(*spoke in French*)

Canada is encouraged by certain signals that the anti-corruption efforts of the Afghan Government are beginning to take hold. The 26 April report of the Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee demonstrates that progress is being made in response to 323 recommendations. Indeed, 53 recommendations have already been implemented, and work has started on 149 others. We encourage further work in that area, as it will assist the international community in remaining engaged in Afghanistan.

The law on the elimination of violence against women was first enacted in 2009, but it is clear that it falls short of providing the intended protections and assistance to Afghan women and girls. The April 2015 report by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights entitled "Justice through the Eyes of Women" demonstrates that much work still remains to be done in order to implement that law fully. Once final, and with the full political will of the Afghan Government, the national action plan for women and peace and security will become another key piece that will require full and effective implementation.

The rule of law and accountability must be applied in Afghanistan. The Government can choose no better goal than to focus on protecting the human rights of the most vulnerable in the country. Afghan women and girls must feel safe in their homes and empowered to participate fully in their communities. That is especially true when their rights are violated by Afghan security forces, Government-affiliated militias or Government officials.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada remains committed to Afghanistan. We are contributing $330 million over three years, starting in 2015, to help sustain the Afghan National Security Forces in order to further the aims of stability and security. Afghanistan remains a country of focus for Canada's international development efforts. Between 2014 and 2017, our $227 million investment in the future of Afghanistan will consolidate and expand the gains made in maternal, newborn and child health, assist in providing access to high-quality basic education for children and youth and embolden women's civil and political participation, human rights and economic empowerment. It will also provide much-needed support for mine-action activities and for efforts to help Afghan actors better manage natural and man-made disasters.

We have expressed confidence in the Government's reform agenda by investing $20 million towards its fiscal gap in 2014, of which $10 million were new funds and $10 million had been re-profiled from the World Bank's Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund. We appreciate the resolve and leadership taken by the National Unity Government, in line with aid-effectiveness principles, to prioritize a significant number of short-term reforms. Canada looks forward to refreshing the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, based on the reform programme and the priorities of the National Unity Government announced at the London Conference on Afghanistan in December 2014.

(*spoke in French*)

Canada also welcomed, on 1 January, the start of the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission and endorsed the principles of NATO's enhanced Enduring Partnership with Afghanistan aimed at extending our cooperation further during Afghanistan's Transformation Decade.

I must note, on behalf of Foreign Minister Nicholson and the Government of Canada, the crucial need to put an end to violations of Afghanistan's sovereignty and to the interference by foreign armed groups — directly or through proxies, including through the support of terrorist groups such as the Taliban, the Haqqani Network, Al-Qaida or Daesh. It is foolish to claim that the material support for those subversive elements could ever be justified as a matter of legitimate policy. Ultimately, in Afghanistan, it is the Afghans who are paying the ultimate price for that folly.

In the last year we have witnessed the tragic consequences that occur when a country, operating behind a thin and flimsy smokescreen of denial, flouts international law and interferes in the sovereignty of another to annex territory and foment instability. The safeguarding of Afghanistan's sovereignty is no less important.

(*spoke in English*)

Without rules, chaos will ensue. Without a repudiation of the worst practices in foreign policy, instability will prevail. Absent an end to interference and violations of sovereignty, the economies of Afghanistan and the region will remain shackled to their self-perpetuating poverty.

(*spoke in French*)

India's Prime Minister noted during his statement to the General Assembly (see A/69/PV.15) that there was no difference between "good terror" and "bad terror". Indeed, there is no place in the civilized world for resorting to terror as a political tool and no cause that justifies terror as a legitimate means. The promotion of terror, which is encouraged by some States or that is deeply rooted there, is a betrayal of our international order. The centres in Quetta, Peshawar and Chitral where terrorist elements plan, train and deploy terrorist attacks in Afghanistan cannot continue to be tolerated.

With regard to the region, the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan must stop using terror for questionable purposes. We must confront the threat of terrorism and all its accomplices. Indeed, the countries that support those groups are not friends of Afghanistan, of the Afghan people or of those who have gathered in this Chamber today to renew their efforts to enable the Afghan people to experience freedom and prosperity.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada echoes UNAMA's observation that Afghans desperately want respite from the ever-present violence that has such a damaging impact on their lives. The Government of Afghanistan has committed itself to achieving peace. We are encouraged by the steps that the Afghan National Unity Government has taken to include women in the peace process.

Terrorists can no longer claim to be fighting foreigners in Afghanistan — instead they are fighting and murdering Afghans and innocent civilians, like those at the Afghan Parliament today. They are the main victims of this conflict. The Taliban and its sponsors must cease their armed opposition and join the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process without further delay.

Canadians from all walks of life continue to support Afghans in their aspiration for peace and security. Canada takes this opportunity to assure the United Nations that we will work with the Afghan National Unity Government and the international community to face the numerous challenges that continue to beset Afghanistan.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.