

SPEECH OF STAFFAN DE MISTURA, THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR AFGHANISTAN TO SECURITY COUNCIL

17 March 2011

Mr. President, Members of the Security Council, dear Ambassador Tanin, Today's meeting marks almost a year since the assumption of my duties in Afghanistan and coincides with discussions over the renewal of the UNAMA mandate. It is therefore an opportune moment to reflect on the events of the last year—from the London Conference to Lisbon summit, the time horizon ahead and the UN's activities in line with Afghan priorities.

What has tied these and the Afghanistan-based events together—the consultative Peace Jirga, the Kabul Conference, the parliamentary elections, has been the increased sense of Afghan ownership and transition to Afghan lead. And transition is clearly premised on sovereignty and the build up of government capacity to manage its own affairs. It is further grounded on the need for the Afghans to articulate and execute a political vision; A vision of a stable, sovereign, Islamic, constitutional democracy; An Afghanistan at peace with itself, its neighbors and the international community.

The Government of Afghanistan is increasingly, and legitimately, demanding to lead all aspects of governance, development, and efforts to achieve peace. In this light we welcome the recent letter from Foreign Minister Rassoul to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. And we view the upcoming review of UN support for Afghanistan as a good opportunity to streamline UNAMA's activities and those of the UN family in a coherent effort of "delivering as one".

The primary focus for the coming months will be on transition of security arrangements as international forces begin the gradual transition in lead responsibility for security to Afghan security forces. This is a formidable challenge of preparing the Afghan forces to shoulder an increased responsibility for military operations. Afghan security forces will be called to sustain the security gains of the past year. At the same time they will need to obtain the confidence of the Afghan people. This is despite a persistent violence and intimidation campaign by insurgents against communities across the country. Such spectacular "horror-inducing" attacks will remain the tactic of the insurgents so long as the military surge incurs its intended objectives.

We welcome transition of security, which we accompany constructively as active observers. But in order for transition be a success, it must be sustainable. And transition is only sustainable if it is linked to 3 elements: a political and development process, in particular peace and reintegration, and a substantive regional process.

It should essentially create sufficient space for dialogue among all Afghans and those who define themselves as such by taking a distance from foreign terrorist elements. And it should present itself as attractive.

Transiting provinces must get incentives and be rewarded instead of neglected and forgotten.

Secretary Clinton's recent remarks were very clear in this regard. The military and ongoing civilian surge needs to be matched by an enhanced diplomatic surge. This call for the necessity of fostering a political process has since been echoed by Afghan and international stakeholders, most recently in Jeddah, matching a call by the Afghans for all international reconciliation endeavours to respect Afghan sovereignty.

Transitioning implies the existence of sustainable institutions at national and sub-national level to transition to. Sovereignty comes with increased responsibility and accountability. And accountability is measured by the Afghan people themselves, through build up of independent institutions and respect for the division of constitutional powers.

And the Afghans this year have made considerable progress in this regard. Two Afghan independent electoral bodies carried out their work with professionalism and improved capacity to lead on electoral preparations with the required technical assistance. The Parliament is now inaugurated.

The election of an Uzbek candidate as a leader of the Wolesi Jirga shows that Afghans can find solutions that meet various ethnic, factional and regional needs. With an executive board fully appointed the legislature has now embarked on its agenda.

The UN attaches great importance to its partnership with the Government of Afghanistan—and its institutions, to manage a successful transition process. We believe that our long experience in the country positions us to serve as a partner to the Government and the International Community to support transition. We further recognize the need for supporting Afghanistan beyond 2014 in efforts to normalize the country, guaranteeing a long-term international commitment, and an Afghan ownership backed by capacity.

Over the past year we have brought into sharper focus the priorities for the UN and the international role in aligning with the Afghan-set stepping stones. We have all the while placed emphasis in their capacity-building and ownership. And we are now positioned to assist the government and the Afghan people in key areas as long as needed and if as such requested.

These areas include: a) assisting Afghan-led efforts to find a peaceful solution and settlement to the conflict, including aspects of confidence-building; b) exercising our moral authority on the situation of human rights and protection of civilians; c) supporting Afghan-led coordination of the International Community, both at the national and provincial levels; and, d) positioning UN assistance in the regions to be of most value to Afghan government partners, in the context of the transition.

Peace, reintegration and the region

The beginning of the month witnessed the International Contact Group meeting in Jeddah, in the presence of the High Peace Council representatives. The meeting hosted at the OIC HQ demonstrated clear and symbolic commitment to the political process. But most importantly, it endorsed the HPC's call for a Kabul-based approach to peace and reconciliation initiatives, with a support group of international and regional key players to soon meet in Kabul. This is in recognition that the instability in Afghanistan has negative impacts on the region but is also crucial for peace in the international community; both requiring the Afghans to take hold of the situation.

The meeting unwittingly further underscored the need for more predictability of the international players' motives vis-à-vis their engagement with Afghanistan. Such a transparency would in turn facilitate the articulation of a vision by the Afghans.

On the ground in Afghanistan, UNAMA continues to facilitate the work of the HPC, at its request through the Salaam Support Group, and supports the unfolding of the APRP-led process, which continues to make progress with an odd 700 reintegrees.

Minister Stanekzai has recently requested UNAMA's further assistance for reaching out to the provinces. Given its neutrality and humanitarian contacts the UN will also continue to reach out to all segments of Afghan society. The UN can provide legitimacy to the process by accepting to meet with those who signal they are open for dialogue.

There is no sustainable solution for peace among Afghans without the support of its neighbors and extended neighbors. And Afghanistan, the heart of Asia, enjoys long and strong historical, political, trade and cultural ties with its contiguous neighbors and across the old Silk Route extending into Eurasia.

The HPC and the Foreign Ministry, and UNAMA under its regional dialogue mandate have engaged in increased regional diplomacy. And here Turkey is the lead partner –for the Afghans and the international community—in a regional process that will lead to the Istanbul conference in the fall.

Human Rights/Humanitarian/Women Civilian casualties have been a great source of concern to the Government and people of Afghanistan. Since 2007 9,000 Afghan civilians have perished in the conflict, with the greatest annual toll of 2,777 civilian deaths recorded in 2010.

Statistics speak volumes, but each civilian death is also human and personal; and we are adamant that no loss of life is acceptable. Cumulatively, the grim statistics serve to facilitate our understanding of the negative trend. They also strengthen our commitment to influence changes in behavior by the parties to the armed conflict. We recognize that the best way to reduce civilian casualties is to end this conflict. But as long as we are witnessing a military surge, which we, by consensus, need to match with a political one, the key is to make 2011, also the year of a surge in protection of civilians.

At the same time we should be poised to react to increased conflict-induced humanitarian needs (as much as to poverty and natural disaster induced ones). Ongoing conflict affects civilians through displacement and mostly lack of access to any basic services. We are searching further for sustainable solutions to existing humanitarian needs, including for returned refugees, which constitute about 25% of the population with some 40% still in dire need of reintegration assistance.

Finally, it is important to take into account the rights, interests, and constraints of men, women, girls and boys in the political, social and economic agenda. Women's protection centers/shelters provide a critical service for vulnerable women and girls including those facing violence and abuse.

Government efforts to regulate and set standards for women's shelters are welcome as government monitoring and oversight of these centers is appropriate. A mix of publicly and privately run shelters may be in best interests of women and in line with international practice. The ultimate objective is to ensure that women and girls fleeing domestic violence have available safe and secure places of refuge and protection. It is equally important that they are not subject to any form of punishment including imprisonment, for running away from such violence.

Footprint

Transition, civilian transition per se, is an imperative and an opportunity. An opportunity to focus on: a critical set of development priorities, better alignment of GoA systems, and increased aid (albeit short term). It is also an opportunity to contribute to peace, a coherent approach to

national priorities such as the Kabul process and APRP. An Afghan transition process will need to be both sustainable and attractive. In this context, the UN sub-national presence in Afghanistan supports the government in: coordination; governance, human rights and rule of law; support to delivery of basic social services – health, education and agriculture, and sustainable livelihoods; humanitarian action; and capacity building.

UN support of government priorities include: a) advocating for alignment of international funding to government priorities at provincial levels; b) providing technical capacity and assistance, coordinating donor efforts in support of provincial institutions; c) enhancing line ministry capacity development for delivery of essential services; d) calling for an equitable approach between provinces earmarked for transition and those not yet considered ready, and e) ensuring that transition arrangements adapt to the diversity of local needs and conditions.

Our strength and comparative advantage lies in the fact that we are diversified. 30 UN agencies funds and programmes are together with UNAMA present in all 34 provinces with spending last year amounting to USD 904.5 million. Millions of Afghans benefit from UN support to nationwide polio vaccinations and improved access to basic health services, nutritional support programmes, support to Afghans returning from other countries and increased access to education, including in areas retaken from the insurgency.

WFP reaches approximately 7.3 million vulnerable Afghans per year with more than 300,000 metric tones of food assistance. The Food for Training programme trained approximately 135,000 people mostly women (total beneficiaries at 800,000). Food for work beneficiaries were approximately 1.8 million. Food for education was provided to 1.1 million children in 5,656 schools. In addition, WFP supported more than 1.6 million people affected by conflict, man-made emergencies or natural disasters.

WHO and UNICEF support the MoPH to vaccinate 7.5 million children under five against polio on every round of immunization campaigns. UNFPA is expanding access to the Basic Package of Health Care Services to 600,000 people living in remote areas not currently covered by health care services.

UNHCR has worked with the government to assist in the voluntary repatriation of more than 4.5 million Afghans to return home since 2002.

To date MACCA has cleared hazards in more than 2,500 communities and in 2010 alone more than 300,000 mines were cleared.

With UNDP assistance, Afghan authorities have established district development assemblies in nearly all provinces. More than 7,400 civil service positions were restructured and salary scales revised

In 2010 support was provided to the 2,600 Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan in terms of infrastructure, equipment, training and mentoring.

UNAMA has recently facilitated the deployment of a special envoy of the ICAO SG, currently in country at the request of the Afghan authorities and stakeholders. This is in order to put forward recommendations for a coordinated plan for the Afghan civil aviation, a crucial sector for a landlocked country such as Afghanistan (which impacts on humanitarian aid, capacity and economic development).

Drugs

Now turning to another threat to Afghan and international peace stability.

The narcotics issue is equally an issue that warrants a shared responsibility among international stakeholders. Progress has been made by government over the recent years. The situation however remains dire and the government needs our full support. The facts speak of a dramatic situation with addiction in Afghanistan rising fast and the treatment infrastructure falling short. Prices are soaring with dry opium, sold one year ago for an average \$95/kg and today to nearly triple that amount.

The measures taken have to impact the entire chain from eradication to crop substitution, precursor chemicals and global demand reduction. Cooperation among the multilateral stakeholders (CIS, CSTO, ECO, NATO ISAF, OSCE, SCO) should be a given.

What is required is a social contract between farmer communities and aid providers. To induce political will at the sub-national and community levels, this is not to be relegated solely to alternative livelihoods. It should encompass the entire support package delivered to specific districts vulnerable to conflict and the cultivation of illicit crops. At the other end of the Social Contract, aid is to be renegotiated in case the farmer communities do not deliver their side of the agreement.

I hereby appeal to the international community to build capacity within the government of Afghanistan and its counter-narcotics bodies allowing these to cope in a decisive manner with the exceptional situation.

Conclusion,

In a crucial year such as this one it is important to sit around the same table with our Afghan and international partners to focus on the same issues, come to compatible conclusions, deliver similar messages and act towards the same objectives.

We have heard the message from the Afghan authorities loud and clear. This is a year of sovereignty and we can't operate just as if it is business as usual. We should constantly adjust our profile and activities on the basis of Afghan-led and Afghan-owned priorities. And we look forward to working with Afghan counterparts in this respect. This is in order to assist them to go through the beginning stages of transition and also be able to incrementally sustain security and political gains beyond this immediate timeline.

The UN has partnered with the Government of Afghanistan for 60 odd years and will remain in the country to support the Afghans as long as they require its assistance. The assurance of our long-term presence remains civilian focused.

UNAMA has thus positioned itself to be supportive of the Afghan government in this period of its transition to greater responsibility. At the same time UNAMA will continue to be an advocate for the Afghan people, drawing attention to the humanitarian needs and calling on all parties to the conflict to put the safety of civilians first.