



Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5347th meeting

Tuesday, 17 January 2006, 3 p.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Mahiga	(United Republic of Tanzania)
<i>Members:</i>	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Li Junhua
	Congo	Mr. Ikouebe
	Denmark	Mr. Faaborg-Andersen
	France	Mr. De Rivièrè
	Ghana	Mr. Tachie-Menson
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Peru	Mr. De Rivero
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Smirnov
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United States of America	Mr. Bolton

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Afghanistan, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Bâzel (Afghanistan) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Arnault to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, on whom I now call.

Mr. Arnault: I wish to thank the Security Council for this opportunity to report to it on developments in Afghanistan since the most recent briefing by Under-Secretary-General Jean-Marie Guéhenno, on 23 November 2005, and ahead of the very important conference on the future agenda of the

Afghan peace process, which is to be held in London in two weeks.

As the Council is aware, almost four years to the day after the signing of the Bonn Agreement, the political transition in Afghanistan was completed with the inauguration, on 19 December 2005, of the new Afghan National Assembly. That inauguration was the capstone in a process that saw, in a very short four years, the installation of an interim, and subsequently a transitional, authority, the adoption of a new democratic constitution, the holding of presidential elections and, most recently, the parliamentary elections of September 2005. As a result, the permanent Government institutions have now been re-established, as required under the Bonn Agreement, and, it is fair to say that, as called for in the same Agreement, they are broad-based, multi-ethnic, gender-sensitive and representative.

Following the inauguration of the National Assembly, in a narrow vote the lower house elected as its chair Yonus Qanooni, one of the architects of the Bonn Agreement, a former presidential candidate and, until his assumption of that parliamentary post, a leading opposition figure. The upper house elected as its chair Mr. Sigbatullah Mojaddedi, former President of Afghanistan, former chair of the Constitutional Loya Jirga and current leader of the national reconciliation programme. Of the five office-bearers in the lower house, one — the second deputy speaker — is a woman.

Since the inauguration, both houses have made some progress in the discussion of their rules of procedure. A number of the draft provisions have already been adopted, and the remainder will be applied on a provisional basis for three months, after which they will be revisited for further consideration. The National Assembly has also decided on the establishment of parliamentary committees, although their membership will need to be determined.

One of the major rules of procedure that has yet to be finalized relates to the process by which the parliament will exercise its constitutional prerogative of endorsing the members of the cabinet. The parliament has yet to decide whether it will do so for the cabinet as a whole or for each minister individually. At the request of the President, the actual review of appointments will take place after the London conference to be held at the end of this month, as he

has indicated that many of his cabinet members are fully involved in the preparation of the Afghanistan compact to be launched in London.

The Government also decided on the establishment of a ministry for parliamentary affairs to facilitate the interaction between the cabinet and the National Assembly. While representatives from the National Assembly will not be part of the Afghan delegation to the London conference, the chairperson of the lower house, Mr. Qanooni, has expressed an interest in working with the Government and the international community to examine the post-Bonn agenda and to identify ways and means to ensure that the benchmarks can be met. More generally, Mr. Qanooni has stressed his intention to cooperate with the Government and the international community. That is a good start, and it is very important that cooperation between the two branches of Government should continue.

On other political developments, I am pleased to report that, on 12 December 2005, the cabinet approved the National Action Plan on Peace, Reconciliation and Justice after several months of discussions and consultations. The plan acknowledges the plight of the millions who were victims of the conflict and seeks to address their needs through reparation, truth-seeking, the strengthening of the justice institutions and national reconciliation. While the implementation of the Plan is bound to face some objections on the part of some groups, a conference on transitional justice that took place in December suggested that there is in fact broad support for truth-finding, the vetting of Government officials and justice as important components of the peace process.

Building on the disarmament programme completed in July last year, a strategy for the disbandment of illegal armed groups has now been agreed by national and international partners. Those groups number in the hundreds and are linked to the drug trade, factions and organized crime and are major contributors in the countryside to the weakness of the Afghan State. Learning the lessons from the disarmament programme, the strategy clarifies that

“success will not be defined by the collection of weapons alone, but the actual disbandment of illegal armed groups and advances in citizens’ security, good governance and the rule of law”.

A concept of operations is near finalization. Herat and Kapisa have been identified as the first two provinces for implementation of the disbandment strategy.

Along with those positive developments, I must once again bring the security situation to the attention of the Council. While the overall number of violent clashes and incidents countrywide has dropped over the past two months, in keeping with the seasonal pattern, the South, as members know, has witnessed a negative trend in the tactics used by anti-Government elements, with deadly effect. In a suicide attack two days ago on 15 January, a vehicle-borne explosive device detonated near a convoy of the Canadian provincial reconstruction team in Kandahar, killing its political director, Mr. Glyn Berry. Three Canadian soldiers, as well as Afghan civilians, were injured in that terrorist attack. Let me reiterate the tribute paid yesterday by the Secretary-General to Mr. Glyn Berry, a senior member of the Canadian Foreign Service and former Vice-Chairman of the General Assembly’s Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

At the end of that day, Kandahar province was hit again by another suicide bomber in Spin Boldak district, leaving a toll of 20 reported dead and 20 injured. Hours before, a roadside explosive device was detonated in Kandahar city, killing three Afghan National Army soldiers and two civilians, and injuring another 10. In total, of the 19 suicide attacks over the past 12 months, 13 have occurred in the last 10 weeks — three in November, six in December and four in January.

In another development, attacks using improvised explosive devices have been carried out against international military forces under NATO leadership in parts of the country where such attacks had been rare, such as Mazar-i-Sharif, Baghlan and Herat. Furthermore, violence and threats against local officials, religious leaders and schools are continuing and intensifying, particularly in the South and South-East of the country. The security dimension therefore remains at the heart of the joint efforts of the Government and the international community, both as a priority concern that needs to be addressed through military and non-military means and also as a limitation on the ability of the international community, and the United Nations in particular, to operate throughout the country.

Let me now brief the Council on the planned transfer of operational authority from Operation Enduring Freedom to NATO. That will continue in 2006. The provincial reconstruction team in Kandahar, previously led by United States forces deployed under Operation Enduring Freedom, was transferred to Canada in August 2005 and will eventually operate under the command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). On 8 December, NATO foreign ministers decided to expand the International Security Assistance Force by an additional 6,000 troops, which would bring the total from the current 9,200 to a little over 15,000. Firm guarantees of individual NATO member States to contribute additional troops for that expansion, however, are yet to be secured.

As it expands to areas previously under coalition command, it is imperative that ISAF be provided with the means necessary to its credibility, particularly in the face of the unusually high number of attacks carried out against international military forces that I described earlier. That will require, in addition to a robust combat capability and coherence across national rules of engagement, a strong political will to stay the course.

The unhappy news that I had to report on the security front should be taken for what it is — an indication that, while great gains have been made in the past four years in many areas, the challenges are still considerable and the job is far from done. Mobilizing the resources of the newly established Afghan institutions and those of the international community remains, therefore, key to the consolidation of peace and stability in Afghanistan.

In that respect, in August 2005 the Security Council welcomed

“the desire of the international community and the Afghan Government to agree a new framework for international engagement beyond the completion of the Bohn process”
(S/PRST/2005/40, p. 2)

and took note of the intention of the Secretary-General to hold consultations with the Government and all concerned international actors on a post-electoral agenda.

Those consultations have been going on since September with a very wide range of actors, both

Afghan and international, and we look forward to their outcome — the compact for Afghanistan — being launched in London on 31 January. The Afghan Government has taken the consultations very seriously and, over the past four months, under the leadership of President Karzai, senior ministers as well as staff from the President’s office have been engaging the international community on a permanent basis. All diplomatic missions in Kabul, international organizations and NATO were consulted repeatedly on the contents of the compact and hundreds of proposals were made and discussed. As a result, the document that is now in the last drafting stage is, we believe, a comprehensive and strong blueprint for what will be, in the next five years, an intensive exercise in peacebuilding.

The compact addresses in an integrated manner the major challenges that confront Afghanistan: security; governance, human rights and the rule of law; development; and counter-narcotics as a major cross-cutting endeavour. It emphasizes the leadership that the Afghan State, strengthened by the democratic process that has unfolded in the past four years, can and must take. It also establishes some key principles aimed at maximizing the impact of the peacebuilding process, including sustainability, capacity-building, gender-sensitive approaches, accountability and the key role to be played by regional cooperation.

The compact also establishes, as precisely as can be, key benchmarks and timelines with a view to facilitating cooperation and follow-up, and also to pacing popular expectation of what can be achieved in the coming years. It seeks to improve the delivery of assistance with detailed commitments to aid effectiveness. Finally, it provides for the establishment of a coordination mechanism that recognizes the leadership of the Afghan Government and also, to quote the Security Council presidential statement of 23 November,

“the central and impartial role the United Nations continues to play for the consolidation of peace and stability in Afghanistan and coordination of the relevant international efforts”
(S/PRST/2005/56, p. 1).

Coming as it did in the wake of the great achievement that was the completion of the Bonn agenda, the latest tragic news from Kandahar has served as a sad reminder of the magnitude of the

outstanding tasks in the consolidation of peace in Afghanistan. But it should not distract us from one of the main facts of the Bonn process, namely that, in the past four years, Afghans have, as the draft compact points out, successfully defied violent extremism and hardship to lay the foundations for a democratic, peaceful, pluralistic and prosperous State. They deserve our confidence that, with undiminished assistance from the international community, they will be equally successful in the realization of the vision contained in the compact for Afghanistan.

I trust that the Security Council will lead the international community, as it did during the Bonn process, into a full and lasting commitment to that vision.

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

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I now invite Council members to a private meeting following the adjournment of this meeting.

The meeting rose at 3.35 p.m.