



# Security Council

Sixty-eighth year

*Provisional***7035**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Thursday, 19 September 2013, 10 a.m.

New York

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*President:* Mr. Quinlan . . . . . (Australia)

*Members:*

Argentina . . . . .	Mr. Oyarzábal
Azerbaijan . . . . .	Mr. Mehdiyev
China . . . . .	Mr. Liu Jieyi
France . . . . .	Mr. Bertoux
Guatemala . . . . .	Mr. Rosenthal
Luxembourg . . . . .	Ms. Lucas
Morocco . . . . .	Mr. Loulichki
Pakistan . . . . .	Mr. Masood Khan
Republic of Korea . . . . .	Mr. Sul Kyung-hoon
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Churkin
Rwanda . . . . .	Mr. Nduhugirehe
Togo . . . . .	Mr. Menan
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . .	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
United States of America . . . . .	Ms. Power

## Agenda

### The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2013/535)

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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/2013/535)**

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Ján Kubiš, 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 His Excellency Mr. Franz-Michael Mellbin, Special Representative of the European Union for Afghanistan, 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/2013/535, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

I now give the floor to Mr. Kubiš.

**Mr. Kubiš:** Last week, Afghanistan's first international football victory in the South Asian Football Federation Championship triggered exuberant celebrations of a historic achievement, in a display of national unity and national pride, and I congratulate our Afghan friends. That achievement is in a way a signal of a gradual return to normalcy in Afghanistan.

The three months since I last appeared before the Council have seen progress in Afghanistan's political and security transitions. Considerable challenges remain and the situation is volatile, but efforts are on track.

Since that time, security incidents have increased compared with 2012, but not to the record levels of 2011. The campaign of bloodshed by anti-Government elements has targeted mostly Afghans, both those in uniform and civilians, including in previously calmer districts. However, they have failed to achieve a significant military victory. The majority of the violence has taken place away from populated areas.

The Afghan army and police have shown courage and an increased capability in rising to the challenge of the security transition. They increasingly trust themselves and work to earn the trust of the population, despite heavy casualties in their ranks. We are requested to trust them as well.

Yet the Afghan security forces' capabilities are not yet fully developed or completely sustainable. International Security Assistance Force Commander General Dunford recently stated that international support would be required for at least the next five years in order to enable entirely independent operations.

I welcome the numerous bilateral partnership agreements that now underlie the multilateral commitments from Chicago. Those are a demonstration of the seriousness and long-term nature of international support.

The 2014 elections remain at the forefront of political life in Afghanistan. More broadly, a stable leadership transition through timely elections in accordance with the Constitution is central to everything else to be achieved.

President Karzai recently emphasized once again that polls would be held, recognizing that "retaining power without elections will raise questions about the system's legitimacy".

The last three months have seen significant progress in technical preparations. That includes the passage of two key laws, appointments to the two independent electoral management bodies and the rollout of the district-level voter registration update. A six-week extension of the registration effort will help ensure maximum participation, including that of women.

The acceleration in registration that has taken place since Ramadan means that more than 1 million new voter cards have been issued, nearly 30 per cent of those to women. The numbers continue to grow steadily.

I welcome the attention that Afghan authorities are giving to securing the elections. Improved coordination of security institutions; robust security assessments; planning and implementing risk-mitigation measures; and instilling greater confidence through public awareness are necessary now. Again, President Karzai has recognized that “any election is better than no election. We cannot delay elections for security considerations”.

With the launch of candidate registration earlier this week, the political contest is formally under way. Clear visions for the future of Afghanistan need to be articulated to allow voters to make their choices. Direct or indirect appeals to narrow ethnic or factional interests must be avoided. The democratic transfer of political authority should contribute to national unity.

A level playing field, including equal access to State resources as well as balance in media coverage, will be important aspects of a fair process. There is increasing concern over the slow progress in creating an appropriate legal framework for the media, especially in this election period, and over violence against journalists, which is seen to be on the rise.

Across the region, there is a growing recognition of the need for a constructive bilateral and multilateral engagement with Afghanistan. The transnational nature of the challenges, including instability, terrorism, population displacement and narcotics, as well as the opportunities — in trade, infrastructure and connectivity — seems to be understood.

I welcome the positive initial signals and engagements from the new leaderships in Iran and Pakistan.

President Karzai’s visit to Islamabad was of particular significance. A new tone in relations seems to be emerging, narrowing the trust deficit. That was confirmed by the statements made by Sartaj Aziz, the Pakistani Prime Minister’s adviser, in which he placed emphasis on genuine efforts to facilitate an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process. He stated that Pakistan has no favourites in Afghanistan and that the policy is one of non-interference. Afghan officials are also reasonably hopeful, as they say, of better cooperation with the new Government of Pakistan. Confidence-building measures, including in the area of economic development, can help build trust through shared interests and prosperity.

The Istanbul Process remains a valuable regional effort, placing Afghanistan at the very heart of Asia. I welcome the People’s Republic of China’s preparations to host the 2014 ministerial summit. Beijing’s seriousness of intent was highlighted during my recent visit. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is also positioning itself to play an increasing role in support of Afghanistan. At this month’s Heads of State summit, there was clear interest in moving beyond anxiety and expressions of concern about the situation post-2014. The emphasis was rather on shared responsibilities, with Afghanistan and the broader international community, in ensuring durable solutions, including through the increased engagement of regional countries.

Indeed, throughout my regional travels, it was clearly understood that political solutions will be the key to sustainable peace, security and economic prosperity in Afghanistan and the region. Most immediately for Afghanistan, this means elections resulting in a legitimate and peaceful transfer of power. More broadly, this must include early dialogue on peace and reconciliation, as was stressed in many of my discussions with the neighbouring countries. The United Nations continues to support the need for dialogue. We hope that new, mutually accepted modalities for such a dialogue on peace and reconciliation can be swiftly agreed and implemented.

Narcotics remain a key problem in Afghanistan and beyond. The annual survey conducted by the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime found that there was a reduction in cannabis cultivation in 2012, although higher yields still saw increased production. I am extremely concerned by assessments that this year will see a significant rise, yet again, in opium cultivation and a continuing drop in poppy-free provinces.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Navi Pillay, was in Kabul this week meeting with President Karzai and senior officials, as well as with civil society representatives and human rights activists. Ms. Pillay noted commendable progress in some areas of human rights and the commitment of President Karzai and other key officials. However, she stated her concern that the momentum of improvements in human rights may not only have peaked but may even be waning. She urged additional efforts on the part of the President and the Government to ensure that justice and human rights — in particular women’s rights — are preserved and consolidated rather than undermined

or sacrificed to political expediency. Issues of human rights and accountability need to be mainstreamed across all lines of effort — political, development and security-related.

The rise in civilian casualties — the vast majority of which are at the hands of anti-Government elements and rogue or criminal armed groups — is of deep concern. The targeted killings of civilians and the use of improvised explosive devices are increasingly frequent tactics. Deaths during this period include the head of the Kunduz appellate court, the chief electoral officer in Kunduz, a district education head in Parwan, and a young woman taking part in vaccination campaigns in Jawzjan, to name but a few.

Indeed, increasing attacks on women are of major concern. Only last Monday, a courageous female police officer in Helmand, Lieutenant Nigara, was gunned down, as was her predecessor, Islam Bibi, earlier this year. The Taliban movement continues to assert in its public statements that anyone associated with the Government or seen to support it constitutes a target. This includes educators, judicial officials and civil servants, in clear violation of international humanitarian law.

A further effect of heightened uncertainty and violence has been increased population displacement. Half a million individuals have been internally displaced, over 100,000 during the first seven months of the year. At the same time, the number of refugees returning to Afghanistan decreased by 41 per cent compared to the same period in 2012. I am happy to note that there is now agreement and commitment from the international donor community to support a common humanitarian fund for Afghanistan, which should become operational in early 2014.

Clear progress has been made in vital elements underpinning Afghanistan's transition processes. At the same time, challenges persist in the security and narcotics sectors in particular. More needs to be done in meeting mutual commitments under the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. A focus on election preparations must not draw attention away from such issues as combatting corruption, the rule of law and economic growth. They are what will ensure Afghanistan's ultimate institutional and financial sustainability.

I welcome the signals of positive support to the region and the ongoing commitment of the international

community in ensuring continued momentum in strengthening Afghan institutions, Afghan sovereignty, and Afghan solutions.

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

I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

**Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan):** I would like to offer you, Sir, my sincere congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. We are very grateful for the role Australia is playing as the penholder on Afghanistan under your leadership and for its capable work in the Security Council. I thank my good friend Special Representative of the Secretary-General Kubiš for his very comprehensive briefing, and more broadly for his leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. Let me also express a warm welcome to our new colleagues, the Ambassadors of the United States of America and the People's Republic of China, to today's debate.

We are now at the beginning of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, which has turned this city into the epicentre of world dialogue. Today's debate is convened ahead of a number of events with a broader focus on Afghanistan: the International Contact Group, the senior officials meeting of the Istanbul Process, a number of ministerial meetings, and the opportunity for the Afghan delegation to meet with our friends and partners at a high level. Meanwhile in Afghanistan, the campaigns for the third presidential elections are about to begin. At the same time, we are envisioning the end of the mandate of the International Security Assistance Force — a mission that started 12 years ago and then became the backbone of international stabilization efforts in Afghanistan — by the end of 2014.

On 18 June, the final phase of security transition, the fifth tranche, began in Afghanistan. Over the past several months, the Afghan National Security Forces have been at the forefront of difficult combat. They have largely proved themselves capable of defending the country and providing security. The transition will take us into a new decade — the decade of transformation characterized by strengthening sovereignty and the normalization of the situation. It is a leap in the right direction, and a proud new chapter in our history.

But while this is a new chapter, it is also remarkably familiar. Throughout our long history, our country has consistently risen up from the ashes, defiant after tragedies, and has re-emerged from war, conflict and

destruction. Today, backed by the collective efforts of the international community, we take responsibility for our security and our defence, as we have done time and again, and we meet that challenge with confidence, courage, and responsibility.

At the beginning of his second term, President Karzai outlined a new vision for Afghanistan's future. He called for full Afghan responsibility for security, a move towards a self-reliant economy and a political solution to end the war. Since 2010, Afghanistan and its partners have solidified those commitments through constructive conferences in London, Lisbon, Istanbul, Bonn, Chicago and Tokyo.

In Lisbon and then in Chicago, the international community committed itself to long-term support after 2014 to train, advise and support the Afghan National Security Forces. Our international partners pledged financial support and equipment necessary for our armed forces to function independently, a goal furthered through strategic partnerships signed with a number of countries including the United States. We signed the Enduring Partnership Agreement with NATO, which will be realized through its post-2014 role, namely, Operation Resolute Support. We are also in the final phases of negotiating the Bilateral Security, Defence and Cooperation Agreement with the United States. Other countries outside NATO have also committed to provide long-term support to Afghan forces. Those agreements are not aimed at fighting wars, but rather at ensuring the security of our country, protecting its people and safeguarding the democratic order we created so painstakingly over the past 12 years.

In addition to progress on security, the transformation decade aims to move Afghanistan's economy from aid-dependency to self-sufficiency. In Tokyo, international donors pledged \$16 billion to support Afghanistan's economic transition through 2017 by adopting the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. The Framework links aid directly to Afghan commitments in sectors such as human rights and governance, and commits donors to strengthen aid efficiency and sustainability while channelling their commitments through Afghanistan's core budget. The senior officials' meeting of the Tokyo Conference looked critically into those obligations in July in Kabul.

Our neighbours are vital to Afghanistan's future prosperity and peace. Yet, as President Karzai explained at the Shanghai Summit last week, our vision is not simply to better Afghanistan's future, but also to enable

us to be a constructive, friendly and dependable partner to our neighbours and to countries in the region. To that end, we are now part of many regional cooperative frameworks. We are at the centre of the Istanbul Process initiative. We hope that this process will become an important forum for all countries in the region to build more trust, counter shared threats to stability and peace and focus on steps needed for the prosperity of all countries in the region. We are very happy to see that our brotherly country the People's Republic of China is going to lead the ministerial conference next year.

We are preparing for our third-ever presidential elections, an accomplishment that demonstrates the increased maturity of Afghanistan's emerging democracy. The past decades were characterized by decisions made with violence, problems solved through war and power solidified with weapons rather than votes. Electing a new President is an important symbol that the bloody struggle for power in our country belongs to the past.

Our enemies want to derail the process, as made evident by the assassination of the head of the Independent Election Commission office in Kunduz province. But let it be known that no such acts will prevent a successful electoral process from taking place.

The coming elections are seen by all as crucial to the success of the transformation decade, the trust of Afghans and the continuing support of the international community. Afghans know that deeply, which is why Afghans from all walks of life are actively engaged in the process and debate before the elections. A robust electoral framework has been established. New members of the Independent Election Commission and the Independent Election Complaints Commission have been appointed. A chairman of the Independent Election Commission has been elected. A national security strategy for elections has been arranged. And two new pieces of legislation have been signed into law.

As Afghanistan looks towards a brighter future, the enemies of Afghanistan — the enemies of peace — continue their violent campaign against civilians, soldiers, civil servants, men, women, children and foreign forces. If they see brutality as the measure of their power, they are wrong; it is a measure of their weakness. It is not brave to kill a police officer, particularly if she is a woman protecting and serving her country. It is time for the Taliban to stop the killing, renounce the violence and heed the call to peace.

The first attempts at peace negotiations were undermined by the Taliban's determination to take Afghanistan back to the past. But the Afghan people do not want to return to the past. They want the violence to end. That is why, despite the atrocities, Afghanistan's leadership has not lost faith in a political solution.

Countries in the region, particularly Pakistan, play an important role in supporting this process. We are encouraged by the outcome of President Karzai's recent visit to Islamabad, and reassured by the new Pakistani Government's guarantees of support for the process. We look forward to working together towards enhanced cooperation.

As we approach the transformation decade, we must secure the gains made in the past 12 years, despite the difficulties, vulnerabilities and risks. In the years ahead, we must build upon our achievements and enable Afghanistan to stand on its own feet, with a strong voice and as a full partner of the international community. In this period of change, we will go into the elections in search of a solution, in a spirit of national unity and coherence, together with our international partners, to further our struggle for democracy, prosperity and peace.

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

**Mr. Mehdiyev (Azerbaijan):** I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš for his briefing. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2013/535) on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, as well as our colleague Ambassador Tanin for his statement, which amplifies clearly the position and views of his Government on the ongoing processes in Afghanistan.

We underline the importance of the continued engagement of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in promoting peace and stability in the country through increased support for the realization of the Government's objectives. We agree that UNAMA's role in the country should evolve to strengthen national capacities, and that its activities should be closely aligned with national priorities. Therefore, UNAMA must be equipped with adequate resources in order to effectively carry out its core tasks.

The reported period was marked by a number of significant developments, which further solidified

Afghanistan's continued progress towards meeting the objectives of the transition period. The 18 June launch of the fifth and final phase of the security transition was a milestone achievement that has put Afghan security forces in the lead and demonstrated their determination to fully assume security responsibilities across the country.

The year 2014 will signify another milestone event in further consolidating Afghanistan's sovereignty and national unity — namely, the presidential and provincial council elections. We note that important steps have been taken in the run-up to the elections, including the adoption of legislative acts and key appointments, as well as other measures to ensure greater public activeness and involvement in the pre-election process.

We welcome the outcomes of the first senior officials meeting on the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, held in Kabul on 3 July, which provided an important opportunity to assess the status of the implementation of commitments under the Framework one year after its adoption and to discuss further ways for moving forward. It is noteworthy that the meeting recognized the progress achieved by the Government of Afghanistan and the international community in meeting their respective commitments, and called for resolute actions by both sides to address areas of the Framework where further progress is required.

Ensuring national peace and reconciliation constitutes a fundamental element of durable stability and unity in Afghanistan. We welcome the continuous efforts of the Afghan Government to advance this process, including by the High Peace Council and the implementation of the Afghan peace and reconciliation programme. We underline the imperative of respecting the Constitution of Afghanistan and preserving the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned character of the reconciliation process. Any attempt to undermine Afghanistan's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and reverse its years-long democratic achievements is unacceptable and must be averted.

Stronger relations and cooperation between Afghanistan and its immediate neighbours and other regional counterparts on a wide range of issues — including peace and reconciliation, regional security challenges, development and humanitarian assistance — are essential for the peaceful and stable future of the country and the region. We welcome

Afghanistan's increased interaction with its various partners within bilateral and multilateral frameworks.

The Istanbul Heart of Asia process is a unique regional platform for dialogue and partnership aimed at promoting security, confidence and cooperation, with Afghanistan at its core. After the adoption of the implementation plans for all confidence-building measures (CBMs) at the Almaty ministerial conference in April, the main focus has now shifted to the realization of concrete practical activities within each CBM. We look forward to the next senior officials meeting of the process to be held in New York next week. We also thank the Government of China for having offered to host the ministerial meeting next summer.

My country has been a part of international efforts in Afghanistan and will remain so in the post-2014 period. We shall continue our active engagement within the Istanbul Heart of Asia process, and are ready to participate in other regional initiatives. As international security forces prepare to withdraw next year, my country is determined to strengthen its cooperation with Afghanistan by providing capacity-building assistance and training programmes in the areas of civil service, law enforcement, mine action, border and customs control, health and rehabilitation.

Most recently, our bilateral relations have become remarkably dynamic, in particular due to a number of ministerial visits from Afghanistan to Baku. We are very pleased with the increased interest of the Government of Afghanistan in benefitting from Azerbaijan's experience in other spheres, such as energy, the exploitation of mineral resources, emergency management and e-Government. We are determined to actively contribute to that end.

Azerbaijan strongly supports Afghanistan's sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity, and will stand by the brotherly Afghan people in their legitimate aspirations to become a secure, self-reliant and self-sustaining State.

**Mr. Churkin** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Ján Kubiš for his briefing on the situation in Afghanistan and his introduction of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/535), as well as to the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan for his very comprehensive statement.

The alarming situation in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan remains at the centre of the international community's attention, especially as the country is

nearing a watershed — the year 2014 — that will largely determine the dynamics of the situation, not only in Afghanistan, but in the region as a whole. We have repeatedly underscored our vision of Afghanistan's future as that of an independent, peaceful, neutral and prosperous State free from terrorism and drug-related crime. That concept was reflected in the Bishkek declaration, adopted by the Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on 13 September.

We are closely following the transition process in Afghanistan, a key element of which is the transfer to Afghans of responsibility for security in their country. We cannot fail to note the efforts of the Afghan leadership to strengthen the capacity of national security forces to effectively counter the security challenges facing the country.

At the same time, we must note that the political and military situation in Afghanistan remains far from stable. We are especially concerned by the fact that the conclusion of the transfer of responsibility for security from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to Afghans is taking place against a backdrop of increased subversive extremist activity, including along the northern perimeter of Afghanistan. The level of the terrorist threat originating in Afghanistan remains critical. Unfortunately, benchmarks for the transfer of authority process are diverging from ISAF's optimistic plans.

A number of issues related to ISAF's mandate remain unresolved, including those related to the supply, equipping and training of the Afghan armed forces, among which there is increasing inter-ethnic tension. The drawdown of the international military presence in Afghanistan is fraught with the risk of further negative developments and could complicate the holding of the presidential election in 2014.

What also remains unclear are the international partners' plans with regard to the format, objectives and legal basis of the remaining military presence in Afghanistan. We are not in favour of maintaining a long-term presence in the country. It is important that there be clear temporal and legal frameworks; efforts to make the presence open-ended gives rise to serious questions about its real objectives.

The projection of force in the region does not only concern us alone. Absolute clarity is necessary with regard to the troop numbers and objectives of a possible NATO operation in Afghanistan, which can be

established only after ISAF has fully reported to the Security Council with regard to its implementation of the current mandate. Any new international military presence in Afghanistan must be based on a clear legal framework. Reformatting ISAF into a new international mission without a corresponding United Nations mandate would create serious legal problems for any logistical support in this field.

A major concern is the alarming situation of illegal drug production and trafficking from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. It is a threat to international peace and security. Suppressing drug trafficking would enable us to more effectively counter terrorism financed by drug trafficking.

We remain deeply concerned about numerous cases of civilian deaths as a result of indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force by combatants. Furthermore, the report does not mention the civilian deaths caused by unmanned aerial vehicles — so-called drones. We recall that responsibility for ensuring the population's security and strict compliance with international humanitarian law lies with all sides, including the international forces.

An orderly process of national reconciliation is a precondition for improving the situation in the country. The participation of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) must be subsidiary in nature. A dialogue with the armed opposition could have a positive impact only if a leading role is played by Kabul and the combatants comply with the principle of national reconciliation, including by laying down their weapons, recognizing the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and breaking their ties with Al-Qaeda and other extremist organizations once and for all.

A clear confirmation of this necessity was the failure of attempts to launch the national reconciliation process through the Taliban contact office in Doha. It merely introduced additional complications and exposed the true intentions of the Taliban, who have no interest in talks with Kabul but are seeking political legitimacy for using force to take power after the international forces' withdrawal. We have to learn the lessons of this undertaking, rid ourselves of illusions about the Taliban's true goals and take a more responsible approach to the issue in the future. The price of an agreement with the Taliban cannot be the erosion of the achievements the country has made over the past 11 years. In that regard, the task of increasing

the effectiveness of the Security Council's sanctions regime, a crucial anti-terror tool, is particularly urgent.

The role played by regional cooperation is more and more important. Strong cooperation between the United Nations, the SCO and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is a significant contribution to settling Afghanistan's problems. We welcome UNAMA's intention of stepping up collaboration with those organizations, something that cannot be said about NATO, which is stubbornly ignoring the CSTO's calls for improving bilateral cooperation on Afghanistan, particularly in the area of the fight against drugs. Even the few incidences where ISAF has conducted various successful operations to destroy heroin laboratories on the basis of information from their Russian colleagues show that combined operations could be achieving much more.

In the context of the expected rise in the profile of the United Nations in regulating Afghan issues after ISAF's departure, we believe that UNAMA will remain the chief coordinator of international efforts to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan. We expect that, in providing assistance for the preparation and conduct of the 2014 presidential elections, the Mission will act strictly within its mandate's guidelines and will maintain a neutral position. Russia has consistently and respectfully supported the Afghan Government's efforts to create the conditions conducive to the rapid stabilization of the country and the region. We will continue to help the Afghan army by supplying it with certain types of arms and munitions and by training specialists in Russia's senior military academies, and so forth. We are open to partnering with all concerned States in the work of implementing projects meaningful for Afghanistan, including in the areas of energy and infrastructure. We also continue to provide humanitarian assistance to the brotherly Afghan people.

Finally, I would like to tell our Afghan friends that we wish the Afghan national football team every success in the World Cup competition to be held in Russia in 2018.

**Ms. Lucas** (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš, for his briefing today and for his work as Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Tanin, for his statement.

Luxembourg fully associates itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union.

I would like to begin by recalling an obvious fact, which is that the efforts of the international community to help the Afghan people will never truly be crowned with success unless the progress made over the past 12 years becomes irreversible. That progress is not insignificant. To cite only a few examples, it has ranged from establishing a collective infrastructure, to creating out of nothing an army that will henceforth be in charge of the country's entire territory and an education network with a current enrolment of 6 million children, including 2 million girls.

How can we ensure that those achievements will last? First, as the Secretary-General recommends in his report (S/2013/535), we should clearly spell out the international community's long-term commitment of support, in order to cut short any speculation about a political and security vacuum after 2014. Then we must help the Afghan authorities to succeed with their political transition. There is no doubt that the presidential and provincial elections to be held in April 2014 will be crucial to the country's future. If they do not appear credible in the eyes of the people, the goal of creating a stable, peaceful society in Afghanistan will be compromised. We therefore call for the holding of transparent and inclusive elections. We take note of the efforts already made by the Afghan authorities to ensure that their conduct will be secure. It is a considerable task, as the assassination yesterday by the Taliban of the head of the electoral commission in Kunduz province has unfortunately already proved. We welcome the establishment of a legal framework regulating the elections. We regret, however, that the framework gives women an insufficiently prominent role, and we call on the Afghan authorities to do more to ensure women's participation in the electoral process, both as candidates and voters.

Another decisive piece of the political transition is national reconciliation. In order for it to succeed, the peace process must be largely carried out by the Afghans themselves, since it is clear that only inter-Afghan reconciliation can create a path towards a lasting end to the violence. Where negotiations take place matters little; what is important is that they be launched and that they can rely on the support of regional stakeholders.

Making the gains permanent is not all. The country must also make progress in a number of other

areas, starting with human rights. In that regard, we are worried about the resurgence in the number of civilian victims of the conflict, particularly women and children. We are also concerned about the lack of ambition in improving the condition of women. On this issue, it should be made very clear that the international community expects the Afghan authorities to live up to their international commitments and ensure respect for the principle of equal rights for men and women as enshrined in the Constitution.

No society can make progress if it deprives itself of the contribution of half of its population. It is therefore essential that the law banning violence against women be applied and that steps be taken to promote women's participation in every area of public life, including the forces of law and order. It is unacceptable that women in leadership positions should be targeted through intimidation and assassination. In that regard, I would just like to cite the example of police Lieutenant Negara, the highest-ranking female officer in Helmand province, who was assassinated in cowardly fashion a few days ago. When women are threatened, they should receive the same protection accorded to their male colleagues.

Lastly, I would like to reiterate the importance that Luxembourg attaches to the fate of children in conflict. We welcome the fact that, in cooperation with UNICEF and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Afghan Government has drawn up a road map aimed at giving new momentum to the Action Plan on Underage Recruitment in the Afghan national security forces. We believe it is crucial that UNAMA continue to give effective support to the Afghan authorities in implementing the Action Plan and the activities laid out in the road map. We urge that UNAMA continue to maintain adequate capacity for the protection of children, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 2096 (2013).

In conclusion, I would like to ask the Special Representative to convey our appreciation to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan for the remarkable work it is doing in what are often difficult conditions.

**Mr. Oyarzábal** (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to thank Special Representative Kubiš for his presentation of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/535), and Ambassador Tanin for his valuable contribution.

The Secretary-General's report provides us with a complete picture of the circumstances surrounding the transition in Afghanistan, the progress made and the difficulties that still have to be dealt with. With the leadership of its Government, the determination and drive of its people and the support of the international community, Afghanistan has come a long way and is preparing to enter into a new stage of independence and sovereignty. In that regard, the success of the 2014 elections is crucial to strengthening peace and reconstruction in Afghanistan and completing the political and security transition.

For that reason we would like to highlight the progress made in preparing for the elections and in passing legislation establishing the electoral framework, with independent electoral institutions. At the same time, we believe it is important that the elections be carried out in an adequate security climate that will enable the Afghan people to freely exercise their rights. In particular, we urge the Government and the international community to ensure the presence of female police and security agents so as to enable Afghan women to exercise their right to elect their representatives. We hope that this aspect will be taken into consideration as part of the upcoming renewal of the mandate of the International Security Assistance Force.

With respect to the security situation, we are deeply concerned at the increase in civilian casualties caused by terrorist attacks, among them a high number of women and children who have either been killed or injured. A particularly disturbing development in that regard is the regrettable increase in the attacks on women in public office or the security forces. All parties must respect international humanitarian law, and those responsible for these attacks must be prosecuted for their deeds.

While recognizing the significant progress that has been made over the past decade in terms of gender equality in Afghanistan and the empowerment of Afghan women, thanks to the priority that the Afghan Government has given to the issue, and as was also recognized by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in June 2013 when the first national report on the matter was being presented, we nevertheless feel that it is possible to continue building on those successes. We understand the challenges that persist but we feel that it is essential that women participate fully in the peace and reconciliation processes. As we have said on other occasions, we

feel that this should also be a strategic priority for the transition. In other words, the full participation of women at all levels and in all sectors of economic activity is essential to building strong economies and to consolidating stable and just societies.

With regard to the process of reconciliation, as is the case for other members of the Security Council and in other situations, we understand that the stability of the country cannot be achieved exclusively through military means. In that respect, we believe that the reconciliation of process as well as the process of strengthening the institutions of the country should be led by the Afghans themselves so that peace and development will be sustainable. The challenges facing Afghanistan are interrelated. That is why sustained progress in the area of strengthening the rule of law and institutions, national reconciliation and social and economic development are mutually reinforcing. In that respect, we believe that the international community will continue to support the people and Government of Afghanistan in its efforts in the area of economic development and social inclusion.

Under the leadership of its Government, the determination and drive of its people and the support of the international community, Afghanistan has come a long way and is preparing to embark on a new stage of its independence and sovereignty. Due to its presence and its ability to interact with all sectors of Afghan political and social life, the presence of the United Nations through the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan has been fundamental and will be even more so as the transition progresses. That is why I would like to reiterate the commitment of Argentina to the Afghan people, to democracy, to human rights and to the development of the country.

**Mr. Rosenthal** (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Once again, we would like to welcome Mr. Ján Kubiš, whom we thank for introducing the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/535). We would also like to thank Ambassador Tanin for his statement.

I have four comments. First, we hope that the year 2014 will see the holding of credible presidential elections that will be accepted by all and conducive to providing viable and sustainable solutions to the social, economic and political problems of Afghanistan. As Mr. Kubiš pointed out to us, we cannot underestimate the importance of the elections for the future of the country. They constitute the best basis for establishing internal legitimacy. They are key to maintaining

international commitments. They confer on Afghans a feeling of ownership with regard to their democracy. They also test the viability of a peaceful transfer of power between the leaders of the country and ensure that the democratic process is accountable to the Afghan population.

We pay tribute to the authorities of the country for the recent progress they have made in their preparations for elections, which seem to be moving in the right direction, particularly with the adoption of the legislative electoral framework and the recent appointment of the commissioners of the Independent Election Commission and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission. Nevertheless, we must express our disappointment at the fact that the legislation adopted has reduced the quota for women's representation from 25 per cent to 20 per cent.

That leads me to my second point. We continue to be concerned at issues relating to the protection and representation of women. The recent attack in Helmand province against a senior police officer as part of a trend of violence against women officers in high-ranking positions is alarming. We condemn those attacks, particularly at a time when the Afghan Government is assuming full responsibility for security throughout the country. For that reason, it is important that we firmly defend human rights and that the Government redouble its efforts to ensure the participation of women in the electoral and reconciliation processes, and that they continue to join the Afghan armed forces in order to promote trust among the population.

Thirdly, I would like to refer to the security situation in the country. On the one hand, we welcome the completion of the transfer of security functions to the Afghans. At the same time, however, we note the upsurge in terrorist attacks and we regret the new statistics according to which the number of civilian casualties continues to rise. In addition, two predominant factors are undermining security efforts and will persist after 2014. I refer to international terrorism, on the one hand, and to drug trafficking, on the other. The ongoing support of the international community for the Afghan security forces and the strengthening of cross-border cooperation will be indispensable to eradicating those phenomena.

Finally, in July, we had the opportunity to hear an informative briefing from the Deputy Secretary-General on his visit to Afghanistan. That high-level visit from the Organization seemed to us to be timely

and relevant. We associate ourselves with the key message delivered by Mr. Jan Eliasson during his visit, encouraging all Afghans to preserve the progress made to date and to continue to work for peace, development and human rights.

In that regard, the United Nations is playing a fundamental role in Afghanistan, particularly at the critical juncture of the transition and in the elections to be held next year. Guatemala will continue to support a robust United Nations presence to ensure that Afghanistan will be able, with the support of the international community, to successfully face the year 2014 and the challenges that will follow.

**Mr. Masood Khan** (Pakistan): We thank Special Representative Ján Kubiš for his comprehensive briefing. His dynamic leadership and the presence and effective role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) contribute to the stabilization in Afghanistan. As we look ahead, the United Nations is likely to play an even greater role in consolidating the gains made in the past decade in Afghanistan and assisting it in negotiating political and security transitions.

The latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/535) outlines the way forward. Earlier, Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson's visit to Afghanistan was extremely important in assessing the overall situation and extending United Nations help to the people of Afghanistan in fulfilling their aspirations towards peace, justice and development.

We are also pleased to hear Ambassador Zahir Tanin, who has shared with us the Government of Afghanistan's perspective and the challenges it is facing. His remarks today are inspiring and forward-looking. We congratulate the people of Afghanistan on winning the South Asian Football Federation match. We appreciate Ambassador Tanin's message to the Council. Afghanistan and Pakistan will work towards enhanced cooperation.

Recently, there has been renewed momentum in Pakistan-Afghanistan relations. Shortly after assuming office, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif sent his Adviser on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Mr. Sartaj Aziz, to Kabul on 21 July to convey our sincere hope of further deepening and broadening our bilateral relations. He underscored that a peaceful, stable and united Afghanistan was in the vital interests of Pakistan. We also said clearly and emphatically that we had no

favourites and we would not interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. President Karzai warmly reciprocated the Prime Minister's sentiments and said that his Government's engagement with Pakistan would help consolidate the ties between our two countries.

President Karzai visited Pakistan in late August. On that occasion, while sharing his vision for a peaceful and prosperous neighbourhood, Prime Minister Sharif said that the people of Pakistan and Afghanistan were bound by unbreakable ties of kinship, faith and history. That vision is a legacy of Prime Minister Sharif's sincere attempts to promote peace in Afghanistan during his first term in office, which contributed to the formation of a broad-based Government in Afghanistan in 1992.

We are also thankful to the Secretary-General for his positive evaluation of the discussion between Prime Minister Sharif and President Karzai last month and his own supportive statements during his visit to Pakistan in mid-August.

Strong bilateral ties, especially trade and economic partnerships, are important for our two countries. Productive engagement between Pakistan and Afghanistan would reinforce connectivity and regional economic cooperation. We will continue to work on trade, energy and communication links through transnational initiatives. In that context, communication, power and rail projects are extremely important.

There is movement on other fronts, too. At the request of the Afghan Government and the Afghan High Peace Council, we have released another batch of seven Taliban detainees and announced the release of Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, in addition to the earlier release of 26 other detainees. We are doing this to facilitate the Afghan reconciliation process.

Progress in the peace process can be attained only if all stakeholders share the goal of reconciliation. We need to pursue that goal together, with unity of purpose. Pakistan's military and civilian personnel have made unprecedented sacrifices to foster peace in the region. Those sacrifices must not go to waste. It will mean success for all of us, when the people of Afghanistan succeed.

It is regrettable that the initiative for dialogue through the Taliban Office in Doha sputtered, but we must not lose hope. Dialogue is indispensable. The Afghan Government, Taliban and other Afghan

political forces must continue to explore ways to find a formula for Afghan reconciliation.

We are glad to hear from the Secretary-General that Afghan security forces have demonstrated increased capabilities and determination in assuming security responsibilities. Filling gaps and addressing deficiencies, we understand, are priorities for the Afghan Government. It is also important that organized crime, narcotics trafficking and illicit arms proliferation be stopped. We need more aggressive policing surveillance of the border. That would help stop the shelling across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Terrorists and militants from both sides are pushing Pakistan and Afghanistan towards escalation. We must not allow them to manipulate the two countries.

The Secretary-General, in his visit to Pakistan last month, called attention to the adverse consequences of the use of armed drones. Drone strikes infringe upon our sovereignty, violate international law, including international human rights and humanitarian law, cause civilian casualties and are detrimental to the combined efforts to fight terrorism. We call for the cessation of drone strikes. Urgent and intense dialogue can help resolve this issue.

We agree with the Secretary-General's observation that representative institutions are the foundation of stable transition processes. In that context, the 2014 elections will guarantee internal and international legitimacy. While we wish the Afghan people success in their security and political transitions, Afghanistan's economy should not be emaciated. The international community must not abandon Afghanistan once again. Pledges and commitments of assistance to Afghanistan must be honoured even as progress is being reviewed under the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. Pakistan for its part, notwithstanding its limited resources, has been extending support through contributions, primarily to education, health and infrastructure projects, worth \$330 million. During the visit of President Karzai, we also reiterated our commitment to helping Afghanistan on energy and infrastructure projects.

Our decision to extend the legal authorization of Afghan refugees in Pakistan until 31 December 2015 is another manifestation of our continued commitment to supporting our Afghan brothers and sisters in distress. Early, honourable and voluntary return of refugees must continue. The continued support of the United Nations

system and the international community is crucial in that regard.

Drug money plays a major role in financing extremism and terrorism. The Secretary-General's report states that Afghanistan accounted for 74 per cent of the world's illicit opium production in 2012. We are trying to develop a regional approach to tackle that problem. We participated in meetings of the Triangular Initiative in Kabul last month. Pakistan organized a regional ministerial conference on counter-narcotics last year, attended by high-level representatives of 13 countries. We are working to establish a regional contact group on counter-narcotics. We believe that UNAMA should support the activities of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to counter the menace of narcotics production and trafficking.

Pakistan's own stability and prosperity depend on peace and security in Afghanistan. This shared destiny drives our relationship with Kabul. We are endeavouring to strengthen bilateral cooperation in all spheres, including the economic, political, military and intelligence fields. We assure the Government and people of Afghanistan of our continued commitment to a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan. As our Afghan brothers and sisters move towards a bright future, they will always find us to be steadfast partners by their side. Keeping faith in each other and a common future remains our best hope.

**Mr. Bertoux** (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kubiš, and the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Mr. Tanin, for their statements.

I align myself with the statement that will be made by the observer of the European Union.

On 18 June, Afghanistan entered the final phase of the transition, which will come to an end in a little over a year. Afghan security forces are now responsible for security throughout the country, highlighting the fact that Afghanistan's sovereignty has been restored. This success was made possible by the international forces, who will continue to support their Afghan counterparts until the end of 2014.

The international community's presence alongside Afghanistan will not end with the transitional period. International partners in Afghanistan, such as France, have formalized or are in the process of formalizing, with the Afghan Government, a framework for different bilateral relations based on strengthened military and

civilian cooperation. Moreover, the contours of the future international missions to support the Afghan security forces are being defined, in response to requests from the Afghan authorities and in accordance with the decisions that have been taken.

This is thus the beginning of a new, promising era for Afghanistan that is also fraught with risks. Everyone around Afghanistan and inside the country is closely following developments in the situation. But, as pointed out by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2013/535), Afghanistan now also has a number of assets, in the midst of a volatile environment. We must build on these pillars and continue to strengthen them.

First, the Afghan electoral process must be exemplary. On 5 April 2014, Afghans will elect a new president. This election will be an important milestone for the international community and its long-term support to Afghanistan, according to the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. These elections should be held as scheduled. They must be credible, inclusive, transparent and peaceful.

We note with satisfaction the legislative measures adopted during the summer, which bode well for the election preparations. We welcome the opening on Monday of the registration period for candidates. We encourage all parties to take ownership of the electoral process and to use the public forum to make their voices heard. Deep differences remain in the vision of what Afghanistan should be. They must be integrated into the political process.

Secondly, the quality of the Afghan security forces must be further strengthened. The resurgence of fighting has led to an increase in casualties among the security forces and civilians. But the Afghan National Security Forces are standing firm and showing that the efforts of the international community to train them are beginning to bear fruit.

We are shocked by the murders of women police officers. An increase in the number of female Afghan police and their protection are vital to allowing Afghan women to feel as protected as men are. We welcome in this respect the development plan of the Ministry of Interior to increase their numbers. The deployment of female police personnel to polling stations will also be crucial to enabling women to participate in the presidential election.

Thirdly, the commitment of all international partners to Afghanistan must be reaffirmed. We

welcome the dialogue undertaken with the partners of the region who have a vested interest in the stability and development of the country, including through the Istanbul Process. We emphasize in this regard the importance of the regional context in the fight against the production and trafficking of drugs and the mobilization of the international community within the framework of the Paris Pact.

The international community will continue to support Afghanistan during this period of transformation. The commitments of Afghanistan's international partners, particularly donors, must be clearly laid out. France will therefore soon release €2 million for the Independent Election Commission through the United Nations Development Programme.

Furthermore, we believe that the United Nations should be called upon to shoulder greater responsibility in Afghanistan and strengthen the political role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which is in our view imperative to facilitating the implementation of the political processes. To this end, we believe it particularly important to simplify the Mission's mandate and to strengthen its capacity to coordinate the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations. Finally, we support the continued presence of the Mission in every area of the country.

I would conclude by saying that only a genuine and inclusive inter-Afghan political process will ensure the emergence of a stable and peaceful Afghanistan. The dialogue must be led by Afghans, in accordance with the principles set by them and endorsed by the international community in Bonn in 2011, and by the Security Council.

Many uncertainties remain, and efforts should be pursued. However, we can collectively contain the risks by relying on an Afghanistan that is stronger today than it has been at any time during the past 30 years.

**Mr. Sul Kyung-hoon** (Republic of Korea): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš for his briefing. We fully support the dedicated work of the Special Representative and his staff. I also thank the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Tanin, for his insightful statement.

Afghanistan now finds itself at a critical juncture as it undertakes the steps necessary for a political and security transition in 2014. In this context, I would like to focus on three key challenges confronting

Afghanistan: the elections, the security situation and human rights.

First, the successful holding of the presidential and provincial elections in 2014 is essential to ensuring a peaceful political transition and to sustaining international support. In this regard, we welcome the adoption of key electoral laws, which will establish sound legal frameworks to guarantee fair and credible elections. We also welcome the timely appointment of the members of the two electoral commissions.

Against this backdrop, we condemn the targeted killing of the senior Afghan election official that happened yesterday. Such acts of violence seriously undermine the ongoing efforts of the Afghan people to achieve a peaceful political transition. With only seven months remaining until the elections, ensuring a safe environment for the electoral process must be a priority.

Enhancing the participation of women is another area that requires more effort. The continued support of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) will be crucial in consolidating the legitimacy and integrity of the process.

Secondly, a stable security environment is of paramount importance in order to ensure that the Afghan transition is irreversible and sustainable. With the launch of the fifth and final phase of the security transition in June, the Afghan security forces are now taking full responsibility for leading and conducting all operations throughout the country. While efforts to strengthen the capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces are under way, a 23 per cent rise in civilian casualties during the first half of 2013 shows that grave security challenges remain. The recent attacks on United Nations facilities and diplomatic premises are another serious cause for concern. All parties must take every feasible step to ensure the protection of the civilians and comply with their obligations under international law. Efforts must be stepped up to train the Afghan National Security Forces and provide them with the necessary support in order to effectively protect civilians and ensure accountability.

Thirdly, the long-term support of the international community is necessary for the Afghan Government to make progress in key areas under the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. In that regard, we welcome the constructive dialogue between the Afghan Government and its international partners during the first senior officials meeting, held on 3 July. At that

meeting, it was reaffirmed that the Afghan Government should deliver on its commitment, with an emphasis on reinforcing the financial management system and tackling corruption.

One of the key commitments made by the Afghan Government under the Framework is the promotion of human rights, especially those of women. We urge the Afghan Government to enhance those efforts by fully implementing the Law on the Elimination of Violence against Women and ensuring the independence of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, among other measures.

UNAMA should continue to play a central role in assisting Afghanistan as it moves forward with its transition. The sustained support of the international community will be vital to Afghanistan's long-term stability. In that regard, we welcome the convening of the International Contact Group on Afghanistan, which will be held tomorrow here in New York. We hope that it will serve as a valuable opportunity to demonstrate the international community's commitment to Afghanistan.

The Korean Government, for its part, will continue to support international efforts to build capacity in Afghanistan, and I reiterate our pledge to provide \$500 million over the period 2011-2015. We will remain committed to working with the Afghan Government and its people in order to meet our shared objective of a prosperous, stable and democratic Afghanistan.

**Mr. Liu Jieyi** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this debate on the question of Afghanistan. Likewise, I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš, for his briefing, as well as the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Mr. Tanin, for his statement, as well as for the welcome expressed to me.

Afghanistan faces an arduous task in restoring stability and rebuilding the country. Recently, thanks to the efforts made by the Government and its people, Afghanistan has registered noticeable progress in terms of building and reconstruction, and the transition process has entered a critical stage.

In order to build an Afghanistan of stability and prosperity in which different communities live in harmony and, ultimately, realize the goal of an Afghanistan governed by Afghans, we need to support the long-term continuing efforts of Afghanistan and all

parties concerned. Continuing support and help from the international community will be required.

I wish to emphasize the following points.

First, China welcomes the recent adoption of two important laws, the electoral law and the structure law; the appointment of the head of the Independent Election Commission; and the fact that the country has arrived at the stage of nominating candidates for the presidency. We hope that all Afghan parties will continue their dialogue and consultations, address their differences appropriately and promote preparations for the elections so as to ensure their success. That will be a milestone in the process of a fully successful transition and transformation in Afghanistan.

Secondly, with regard to the frequent occurrence of security incidents in Afghanistan, which have resulted in large numbers of civilian casualties, China wishes to register its concern. We call on all parties to observe international humanitarian law and related international law.

The Afghan National Security Forces have entered the final stage of preparations before they can take over security responsibilities. We hope that all parties concerned will adopt a responsible attitude, hand over security responsibilities to the Afghan Government, and focus on building the capacity of the Afghan military and police so as to ensure the successful completion of the security transition.

Thirdly, China supports an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned national reconciliation process, with a view to achieving peace and stability. We support the active role played by the High Peace Council in the promotion of national reconciliation and welcome the provision of additional support by Pakistan and other countries of the region. We hope that the international community will support and work with the Afghan Government and people in their efforts to create an enabling external environment for the reconciliation process.

Fourthly, peacebuilding in and the reconstruction of Afghanistan will require strong support from the international community. The international community must respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan and honour its commitment to support Afghanistan, in accordance with the priorities set out in the national development strategy for Afghanistan, and support the strengthening of its capacity for autonomous economic and social development.

China supports the United Nations in general and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in particular with respect to its playing a leading role in the coordination of international efforts to help resolve the Afghan question and rebuild the country.

Fifthly, China supports Afghanistan in its efforts to strengthen its friendly relations with neighbouring countries, conduct regional cooperation and actively tackle such common challenges as terrorism and narcotics. China will host the fourth Ministerial meeting of the Istanbul Process in Beijing next year, thereby further strengthening efforts to promote cooperation among the countries of the region and peace, stability and development in Afghanistan and in the region.

At the same time, related regional cooperation initiatives should respect the concerns of the countries of the region; make full use of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and other regional organizations; and be conducted on the basis of consensus, through extensive consultations.

China has long been committed to developing strategic partnerships with Afghanistan. We follow closely and have been actively involved in the peace and reconstruction process in Afghanistan. China will continue to provide assistance to Afghanistan to the extent of its ability and to play a constructive role in realizing peace, stability and development in Afghanistan.

**Mr. Nduhungirehe** (Rwanda): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for having scheduled today's debate on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. I wish also to thank Ján Kubiš, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing, and Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for his statement.

This debate gives us an opportunity to reflect on the progress made towards a stable transition in Afghanistan, be it in the political, security or economic areas. Despite a number of challenges in the transition process, mainly related to insecurity and to the usual post-conflict reconstruction challenges, Rwanda recognizes the tremendous progress achieved so far in Afghanistan. It is important to note that Afghanistan has an effective Government over the territory that is geared towards national unity, reconciliation and the promotion of democracy.

My delegation attaches great importance to the idea of dialogue and political settlements in nation-building.

It is in that context that we welcome the endeavours of the Afghan Government to reach out to opposition groups, including the Taliban. Any peaceful engagement should be inclusive and transparent and should be accompanied by early confidence-building measures. In that regard, Rwanda reiterates its full support for the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and national reconciliation processes. We also acknowledge the progress made by the Government of Afghanistan in preparing for the presidential and provincial elections scheduled for next April. We welcome the adoption of the electoral legislation, the legal framework for the Independent Election Commission and for the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission. Those institutions represent the foundation of a vigorous electoral architecture under mutually agreed rules by which the forthcoming vote can be contested should the need arise.

We hope that all Afghans will participate in that democratic exercise and that the Government of Afghanistan will make every effort to ensure that women participate in that electoral process and are adequately represented in elected bodies.

My delegation expresses its deep concern over the increasing attacks against officials and civilians in Afghanistan, particularly attacks against prominent women, as attested by the assassination by the Taliban of Lieutenant Nigara, a senior officer in the Afghan police. We also condemn the assassination of the head of the Independent Election Commission in Kunduz province. We hope that the Afghan Government will ensure that the perpetrators of those crimes are held accountable, and we call on the international and regional partners to support the Afghans in averting such heinous crimes. Rwanda reiterates its appeal to the international community to equip the Afghan forces commensurate with the regional realities and existing security threats.

Afghanistan's long-term stability and economic development will also depend on its neighbours and the role played by the region as a whole. We welcome the continued efforts of President Hamid Karzai to strengthen cooperation with neighbouring countries, as demonstrated by his recent official visit to Islamabad and Tehran. Rwanda expresses its support for constructive engagement and cooperation between countries of the region, which are essential in building and reinforcing long-term stability. We attach great importance to the general mutual commitment made at the Tokyo Conference in July 2012, which should guide

the cooperation between the donor community and the Afghan Government. We encourage the Government to honour its commitments in all fields, as stated in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework.

In conclusion, let me express Rwanda's deep appreciation for the role played by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. I also strongly believe that as the International Security Assistance Force plans to draw down by the end of 2014, the United Nations will continue playing its crucial role by supporting Afghan Government institutions as they take on a greater share of the responsibility for the socioeconomic development of their country.

**Ms. Power** (United States of America): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Kubiš for his briefing today. As always, we are grateful to the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and to the United Nations country team for the hard and challenging work they do in helping Afghans lay the foundation for a more stable and prosperous country. We remain solid supporters of the United Nations role in Afghanistan today and to its enduring role beyond 2014.

We thank Ambassador Tanin for joining today's discussion. As always, we value his close cooperation with the Security Council, and the United States is of course committed to supporting a fully sovereign, democratic and united Afghanistan.

Let me touch on four issues this morning: security transition, political transition, human rights and what the international community needs to do to help Afghanistan be successful going forward.

First, I should like to recognize the continued progress being made in Afghanistan's security transition. The Afghan National Security Forces have successfully taken the lead in security nationwide, with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) moving into a support role this past June. I commend the quick response of the Afghan and ISAF security forces who secured our consulate and personnel in Herat after the 13 September terrorist attack, and I offer our condolences to the Afghan victims and their families. We thank the Government of Afghanistan for its support and ongoing partnership. Today, it is Afghan forces who are defending the Afghan people and the Afghan Government. That is at it should be, and it is also appropriate that we continue to support them in

that role, especially with the onset of elections next year.

That leads to my second point. We cannot stress enough that the next few months will be critical to a peaceful and constitutional political transition. A transparent, credible and inclusive electoral process is essential to Afghanistan's stability and democratic development, as well as to sustaining international assistance to the Afghan Government, which has been very clear about its intention to hold the elections as scheduled and is already constructively engaged.

In that regard, we commend Parliament's passage of elections laws, which President Karzai signed at the end of July, and the ongoing implementation of those laws, including the seating of the independent election commissioners and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission. The support and engagement of the international community, both bilaterally and through the United Nations, remain essential.

But these political and security transitions are not happening in a vacuum. Human rights matter, and my third point is that as we progress through the transition period and beyond, it is imperative that human rights — particularly the rights of women and girls — be protected and promoted. The improvements in human rights, especially the rights of women, made since 2001 must not be reversed.

We are deeply disturbed, as others have indicated as well, by recent reports of targeted and, in some cases, deadly attacks on Afghan female police officers, civil servants, Government officials and others. Afghan women have a tremendous contribution to make to the future of their country, and they must be part of Afghanistan's civic life as leaders and decision-makers. The role and participation of civil society actors and other women's rights advocates in decision-making processes is critical to ensuring peace and stability. There can be no overall progress in Afghanistan without women's progress.

Regarding the appointment of commissioners to the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission in July, we want to stress how essential it is that the Commission's independence and integrity be upheld, that the commissioners themselves be independent, and that the Commission be seen as credible in the eyes of the Afghan people.

Fourthly and finally, regional and international support must be sustained even beyond the transition

process to give Afghans a chance to build this better future. We look forward to the International Contact Group and Heart of Asia meetings in the next few days here in New York. The United Nations must play a central role as Afghanistan undergoes important political, security and economic transitions. UNAMA's leadership should continue to provide support to the 2014 Afghan elections, including close engagement with the Independent Election Commission on training, public information campaigns and fraud mitigation efforts.

A pivotal period lies ahead for Afghanistan. The United States remains committed to a lasting partnership with Afghanistan as it goes through transition and approaches its decade of transformation.

**Sir Mark Lyall Grant** (United Kingdom): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2013/535), his Special Representative Mr. Ján Kubiš for his briefing, and Ambassador Tanin for his positive remarks this morning.

Let me begin by condemning the recent attacks in Afghanistan. Over recent months, we have seen a spike in civilian deaths and injuries, including among women and children. As Mr. Kubiš noted, the killing of Lieutenant Nigara — one of Afghanistan's senior policewomen — is the latest tragedy. These attacks are reprehensible and a reminder of the significant challenge to building peace in Afghanistan.

I will focus my statement today on five key areas: security, the 2014 elections, the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, peace and reconciliation, and the United Nations future engagement in Afghanistan.

First, on security, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) have now assumed the lead for security throughout the country and continue to grow in confidence and capability. This is a significant achievement, but we must not be complacent. As the Secretary-General highlights and Mr. Kubiš confirmed today, this has been a challenging summer for the ANSF. The number of casualties has risen, underscoring that ongoing support from the international community will be vital. The United Kingdom will continue to support the ANSF, including through taking the coalition lead at the new Afghan National Army Officers Academy.

Secondly, with respect to the 2014 elections, Afghanistan is in a crucial phase ahead of presidential and provincial elections in 2014. The window for

candidate registration is now open, and we look forward to broad participation, including by women, as Afghans prepare to shape the future of their country. A strong framework for the elections will be essential. The Law on the Structure and Duties of the Independent Election Commission and the electoral law all represent significant steps towards delivering transparent, credible and inclusive elections. For our part, the United Kingdom will continue to support this process, including through an additional \$12 million to the United Nations Development Programme ELECT II programme.

Thirdly, as to the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, the 3 July meeting confirmed that good progress is being made, but neither the Government of Afghanistan nor the international community can afford to shift their focus. Progress in priority areas, such as the role of women and human rights, is essential for long-term development and to sustaining donor funding. We encourage the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to assist in monitoring, coordinating and reporting on progress over the coming months.

Fourthly, with regard to work towards a political settlement, such a settlement remains the best way to secure sustainable peace in Afghanistan. We welcome continued efforts towards an Afghan-led peace process. Over the coming months, we need to see early meetings between both the Taliban and the United States and the Taliban and the Afghan High Peace Council. Afghanistan's closest neighbours will also be central. President Karzai's visit to Pakistan last month delivered tangible outcomes in the pursuit of peace and trade and economic agreements. In addition, the United Kingdom continues to support the Istanbul Process and other initiatives that encourage trade, economic prosperity and security.

Finally, let me turn to the future of the United Nations after the elections and beyond. The partnership between UNAMA and the Government of Afghanistan is an important one. While that relationship will evolve as the task facing the international community in Afghanistan shifts its focus, UNAMA must retain the right presence throughout the country. It must provide the right level of support for the international community to deliver on agreed commitments, in particular on the human and women's rights agenda. As the report of the Secretary-General highlights, to achieve that it is vital for UNAMA and United Nations agencies to adopt a

“One UN” approach and better coordinate activities on the ground.

We do not take the challenges ahead lightly. But there is room for optimism and, together in support of the Government of Afghanistan, we can meet our shared vision of a stable, inclusive and prosperous Afghanistan. The United Kingdom will continue to play a committed and strong role in that shared endeavour.

**Mr. Loulichki** (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Ján Kubiš, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, for presenting the report (S/2013/535) of the Secretary-General. Through him, I should like to commend all the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the country team for their support for the efforts of Afghanistan. I would also like to thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin for his update on the efforts undertaken by his country to face up to the challenges it faces.

The Secretary-General’s report gives an account of the genuine momentum on the political front as witnessed by the preparations for the presidential and provincial elections in 2014, which will be a prelude to the launch of the transformation phase that will begin with the end of the presence of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. That will be both a decisive stage in the history of the Afghan people and a determining factor in the stability of the entire region.

We welcome the progress made in the process of organizing the elections, first and foremost the appointment of the Chair of the Independent Election Commission and the law governing the holding of the elections. The Independent Election Commission’s approval, on 31 July, of the operational plan for the 2014 elections and its endorsement of the United Nations electoral support project are important steps that should be welcomed. The international community should support those efforts, not just during the electoral process but also during the post-electoral stage and in the course of the withdrawal of international forces in 2014.

Afghanistan continues to face security challenges, including terrorist acts as witnessed by the 23 per cent increase from 2012 to 2013 in the number of civilians killed, including 78 children. The Government is pursuing its efforts to build its forces, with a view

to assuming its responsibilities in this area. That is a burdensome and demanding task. The establishment of a community policing force, the putting in place of a special trust fund to support an integrated approach to justice and the rule of law in Afghanistan, and the expansion of the community policing programme are concrete measures conducive to contributing to the peaceful holding of elections and improving the security situation in the long term.

Afghanistan’s level of stability has an impact on its neighbours. It is reassuring to see the development of regional cooperation among the countries of the region based on solidarity and with a view to helping Afghanistan move towards stability, democracy and development. Through Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan has given an indication of good-neighbourliness and cooperation in addition to its humanitarian gesture to continue to host on Pakistani territory, until 31 December 2015, camps for registered refugees.

The Kingdom of Morocco welcomes the efforts of Afghanistan to integrate into the regional economic landscape, as attested to by its joining the Energy Charter Treaty on 7 July, thereby becoming the fifty-fourth member, as well as the progress made with regard to the gas pipeline project involving Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. This is a positive step towards regional economic integration. That commitment to regional cooperation and integration was also reflected at the meeting of Council of Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which reaffirmed its support for an independent, peaceful, neutral and prosperous Afghanistan that is free from terrorism and drug crime.

My country welcomes this dynamic of regional cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours. This is a major milestone in moving successfully after 2014 towards an Afghanistan that takes its destiny in its hands and builds a democratic society where there is reconciliation and respect for human rights. The assumption of such responsibility by Afghanistan nevertheless requires — as everyone who has spoken before me has emphasized — support on the part of the international community and the United Nations, before and after the 2014, so as to make Afghanistan’s stability permanent.

**Mr. Menan** (Togo) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking Mr. Ján Kubiš for presenting the report (S/2013/535) and for the work he is doing as

the Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I also thank Ambassador Tanin for his very informative statement.

This is the Council's third debate this year on the situation in Afghanistan. We note that, in spite of the efforts made, there continues to be uncertainty on the political, security, humanitarian and human rights fronts. We also note that cooperation continues to grow between Afghanistan and the countries of the region.

On the political front, the situation continues to be dominated by the peace process and the elections of 2014.

With regard to the peace process, the announcement of the opening, on June 18, of a Taliban office in another country has dealt a blow to the process of inter-Afghan reconciliation. The Government's decision to suspend talks and opt for an Afghan-led dialogue is the result of the anxiety aroused by the opening of that office, whose attributes were interpreted in different ways. Faced with such a situation, we urge all Afghan parties to resume dialogue. In that regard, we commend the joint secretariat of the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme on its work in connection with former insurgents, to which UNAMA provides continued support.

With regard to the 2014 presidential and provincial elections, the preparation process has given a new dynamic to political life in Afghanistan, with the valuable support of the United Nations Development Programme. The adoption of laws on the organization and functions of the Independent Election Commission and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission is part of that dynamic. Similarly, we welcome the consultations that led to the appointment of members of the Commission, while we also regret the lack of civil society organizations represented among them.

The preparations for the 2014 elections are unfortunately taking place in an atmosphere of insecurity. Moreover, there are disagreements about the holding of the elections themselves. At the same time, negative campaigns are being organized to discourage voters. This unfortunate situation calls the attention of the international community to the fact that Afghanistan will always need the help of all its partners to complete the process under way.

With regard to the importance of the 2014 elections, while Afghan forces are increasingly assuming security-related responsibilities, it would be appropriate for the

Secretary-General to report to the Security Council on the state of the preparations for the elections to allow the Council to consider the potential difficulties.

The security environment in which the elections are being prepared is reflective of the wider situation. Security incidents have not abated, despite the continued recruitment by Afghan forces and efforts to strengthen the capacity of those forces. Acts of violence are increasing, and United Nations staff and their partners, as well as diplomatic missions are being targeted. The insecurity is fuelled by the problem of drugs, the cultivation of which continues to grow. We encourage the Afghan Government to pursue and intensify its fight against poppy cultivation in particular.

The human rights situation is also of concern in Afghanistan. Irregularities in the procedure for appointing new members of the Independent Commission for Human Rights have been reported. We urge the Government to preserve the status of the Commission, as it has endeavoured to do.

The protection of civilians is also weakened and civilian casualties are in the thousands because of the use of improvised explosive devices and stepped up ground fighting. With regard to the persistence of torture and other mistreatment, we urge the Government to continue to take the appropriate measures in order to control such violations, particularly against women and children.

Togo also condemns the use by the insurgents of child soldiers and welcomes the progress made in the fight against that scourge through the Action Plan on Underage Recruitment. In that respect, the support of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflicts and of UNICEF is welcome.

The signing of agreements by Afghanistan with neighbouring countries portends a promising future in the relations between that and other States in the region and beyond, as Mr. Kubiš and the Ambassador of Afghanistan have just affirmed. In that context, the continued hospitality of Pakistan towards Afghan refugees should be commended. Furthermore, the number of people needing assistance is estimated at more than 135,000.

I conclude by stressing that Afghanistan needs the support of the international community as a whole more than ever to meet the challenges facing it, especially in view of the withdrawal of international forces by

the end of next year. In that regard, Togo would like to again thank the United Nations, UNAMA, the funds and programmes and Government partners for the assistance they continue to provide to ensure that Afghanistan can assume its place in the community of nations.

**The President:** I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

First of all, I should thank Special Representative Mr. Ján Kubiš for his briefing and for his leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and all United Nations personnel in Afghanistan for their dedication and efforts. I also thank Afghanistan's Permanent Representative, Ambassador Zahir Tanin, for his update on progress in Afghanistan's transition and for his always important engagement in New York.

Three months after the milestone 2013 announcements, significant progress has been made on the security transition. The Afghan National Security Forces are now in national security lead and have demonstrated their increasing capacity to deliver security and stability for the Afghan people as Afghanistan progresses through its transition. But although the insurgency is diminished, it is persistent. Threats to law and order endure. Therefore, the continued commitment of the international community to support the Afghan armed forces and police will continue to be essential for Afghanistan's long-term security. Equally, progress in accordance with commitments made in Tokyo is vital if the legitimate expectations of the Afghan people are to be met and the unprecedented level of resources pledged by the international community sustained. While there has been some progress on the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, more is needed. In particular, credible inclusive and transparent elections will be vital for political and economic transition. The passage of the electoral law and the Law on the Structure and Duties of the Independent Election Commission and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission provide a robust legislative framework, but strong implementation will be critical. We encourage work to fully implement those laws.

Strong and inclusive voter participation is important to the credibility and acceptability of election results. We applaud the public outreach efforts being undertaken as fundamental to election preparations. The United Nations, as supported by countries such as Australia, is providing vital technical support.

We must build on the improvements in respect for human rights in Afghanistan over the past decade, including the rights of women and girls. Constitutional and legislative commitments to gender equality must be upheld. The Afghan Government must maintain momentum in preventing and addressing violence against women. While gains have been made, gaps exist in the systematic implementation of the elimination of the Law on the Elimination of Violence against Women.

Afghanistan's successful transition will increasingly depend on generating broad-based economic growth that creates jobs and helps underpin fiscal sustainability. That requires the Afghan Government to prioritize its development agenda to reduce poverty and improve livelihoods. Tackling corruption is an important commitment under the Tokyo Framework.

As the Secretary-General notes in his report (S/2013/535), Afghanistan continues to face significant humanitarian challenges, including a worrying trend of growing internal displacement. An increase in civilian casualties, primarily caused by anti-Government elements, is of grave concern. And we must condemn in the strongest possible terms the recent increase in attacks that have targeted civilians, including senior female officials, female police, female members of Parliament and election officials.

Military action alone will not end the conflict in Afghanistan. A negotiated political solution is needed to ensure lasting security and to lock in the gains of the past decade. The process will be long, complex and inevitably subject to set backs. But efforts at peace and reconciliation must continue. The Council's Taliban sanctions regime was established in response to the Taliban's human rights violations and use of Afghan territory for terrorist activities. The sanctions regime will continue to be an important tool, which can operate flexibly in support of the peace and reconciliation process.

The Security Council's support for Afghanistan's transition reflects the broader international community commitment to Afghanistan's future. Australia looks forward to working with Council members in chairing the negotiation of the the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) draft resolution, which is due for adoption by the Council in the second week of October. UNAMA will continue to play a vital role in the active promotion and advocacy of human rights, including the rights of women and girls, and in coordinating the efforts of United Nations agencies

and the international community in line with the priorities of the Afghan Government. We look forward to shepherding the negotiations on the renewal of UNAMA's mandate in March 2014, including on the need for adequate funding.

In conclusion, as the Secretary-General notes in his report, we now need to protect the gains of the past decade. As the transition moves forward, the role of the United Nations and its affiliated agencies remains important. However, while the international community remains committed to assisting Afghanistan to ensure that those gains are sustainable, it is the Afghan Government itself that has the ultimate responsibility for seizing the opportunity before it to create a secure and prosperous future. We are confident it will do so.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

**Mr. Cardì** (Italy): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2013/535) and Special Representative Ján Kubiš for his briefing. I would also like to thank Ambassador Tanin for his statement today.

Italy fully aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union. I would also like to add a few remarks in my national capacity.

Afghanistan is about to enter a crucial phase of its history. From now until the end of 2014 it will witness a series of important moments involving the closely connected political and security aspects of its transition. I am referring to the presidential elections of April 2014, the subsequent handover from President Karzai to his successor, the winding-down of the International Security Assistance Force and the defining of the forces that will take over from it.

In terms of security, the beginning of the fifth and last phase of the transition process, on the basis of which the Afghan national security forces will assume full control of the territory, was accompanied by a fighting season that produced an unending series of

high-profile terrorist attacks and victims. This phase is a source of concern, and we cannot let our guard down, given the forthcoming critical transfer of responsibility for nationwide security from NATO to Afghanistan. Nevertheless, the Afghan armed forces have made clear and steady progress in addressing the demanding daily challenge of controlling the territory and ensuring the country's security.

At the political level, where security continues to be a major issue, the lead-up to the presidential elections has now begun in a symbolic way with the presentation of candidatures. We would like to express our appreciation for the Kabul authorities' change of pace in defining an institutional framework for regulating the elections through the recently passed election law. It is Italy's hope that until the new Head of State is proclaimed, the Afghan authorities will take all action necessary to guarantee an inclusive, transparent and credible election process and to promote universal rules respecting and representing every aspect of civil society and the various political parties.

In the upcoming elections, United Nations support for the Afghan authorities through the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) will be invaluable. UNAMA will of course play a crucial role in helping to strengthen the legitimacy and integrity of the elections. Equally important during the transition period will be its support for Afghan institutions as they gradually take on responsibility for the country's civic and economic development. These and other issues will be the focus of the debate to be held during the meeting of the International Contact Group in New York on September 20.

I would like to make another point, which is that there can be no prospect of stabilization in Afghanistan without national reconciliation. Italy affirms its support for the peace process, recognizing Afghanistan's full ownership of that process, and hopes that the transition will not lead to any reversals of the gains that have been made in the areas of democracy, civil rights and gender equality, or to any concessions to terrorism.

In the regional context, Italy recognizes the unquestionable progress that has been made through the Istanbul Process, which we support, and wishes to emphasize the importance of implementing the plans of action adopted in Almaty in April. We look forward to the outcome of the next meeting of senior officials in New York. Lastly, we hope that the recent establishment of a more cordial climate between Afghanistan and

Pakistan will bring positive developments in the areas of regional cooperation and the inter-Afghan dialogue.

In closing, Italy wishes to reiterate the message of the Tokyo Conference. As we look forward to the transformation decade, the continued support of the international community for Afghanistan will be linked to conditions concerning Afghanistan's attainment of measurable results in areas such as the democratic and electoral process, the fight against corruption, administrative and economic governance and the protection of human rights, particularly those of women. Our assistance cannot ignore the principles of reciprocity, conditionality and responsibility that remain mainstays of the partnership between Afghanistan and the international community on the one hand and between Afghanistan and Italy on the other.

I would like to take this opportunity to once again express Italy's appreciation for the role of the United Nations in Afghanistan, starting with UNAMA.

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

**Mr. Puri (India):** I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your leadership of the Council this month. I would also like to begin by thanking Ambassador Zahir Tanin for his statement, and to join you, Mr. President, in thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš, for his contribution and for his strong leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

My full statement will be circulated; let me read a few extracts. We commend the efforts of the Afghan Government to ensure completion of all the technical preparations necessary for holding a successful presidential election. A peaceful and free election process that elects an Afghan President acceptable to the people of Afghanistan remains key. The international community must strongly support the Afghan authorities' preparations in that endeavour, and at the same time should strongly oppose any outside efforts to derail the process.

The security situation in Afghanistan is fragile, not because of the weakness or incapacity of the valiant Afghan security forces, but because of the continued threat presented by terrorist and extremist groups to Afghanistan's security. This was demonstrated most recently in the deplorable attack on the Indian consulate

in Jalalabad on 3 August, which resulted in injuries to several Afghan security personnel guarding the consulate and the deaths of innocent Afghan citizens, including 10 children.

India does not have an exit policy in Afghanistan and will not be deterred by such attacks. We do not see the attack as aimed only against India; it is also directed at the efforts of the Afghan people to overcome the tragic consequences of the last several decades of war and conflict. The Secretary-General's report (S/2013/535) cites a figure of 3,500 Afghan servicemen killed and wounded in action in the second quarter of 2013. We salute the valour of the Afghan National Security Forces personnel who have made that supreme sacrifice. The recent merciless killing of Sayed Kamala Sushmita Banerjee, a woman medical worker of Indian origin who was married to an Afghan national, reflects the intolerance of those who oppose Afghanistan's socioeconomic development as well as the challenges that lie ahead for Afghanistan.

Many of the terrorist attacks in Afghanistan have been coordinated by the Taliban and Al-Qaida and their affiliates. They are clear indicators that we must be unceasingly watchful for the designs of those terrorist organizations. The Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) concerning Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities must remain proactive and attentive in its listing and delisting process of individuals and entities for targeted measures. The international community should continue to back the Afghans' efforts to address the security and terrorist challenges they face. Concerted action is also needed to isolate and root out the syndicate of terrorism, which includes elements of the Taliban, Al-Qaida, Lashkar-e-Taiba and other terrorist and extremist groups. It is therefore important that the transition plan take into account the threats posed by those terrorist organizations and factors them into the security situation on the ground.

The international community must reassess the role it wishes to play in Afghanistan's internal political processes, which brings me to the issue of the renewed mandate we will be conferring on UNAMA. We should define UNAMA's political mandate to ensure that it keeps its focus on supporting the institutions of politics rather than the political process itself, which must be left to Afghanistan's own leaders. At the same time, the new mandate for UNAMA must expand its humanitarian and developmental role by aiming for

better delivery of assistance in Afghanistan. To the maximum extent possible, delivery of the humanitarian and development services must be done through Afghan State institutions, because it is not capacity-substitution but capacity-building that we are seeking to achieve in Afghanistan.

In conclusion, 2014 will be a watershed for Afghanistan. The international community's support for Afghanistan will be critical in the transition. We appreciate the good work being done by UNAMA in often trying conditions, and assure the Council that India will continue to stand by Afghanistan during this period of transition and thereafter.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the Under-Secretary for Economic and Development Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia and Special Representative of Estonia for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

**Mr. Reinart** (Estonia): Let me first join my colleagues in thanking you, Sir, for organizing today's debate. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2013/535) and Special Representative Ján Kubiš for his briefing and the tremendous work that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has been doing. I also support and align Estonia with the statement to be delivered shortly by the Special Representative of the European Union for Afghanistan.

Although many challenges remain for Afghanistan to become a wholly secure, democratic and prosperous country, we recognize with satisfaction that the Afghan people are successfully taking over responsibilities in their own country. That is crucial, as without ownership neither real transformation nor development will ever be possible or sustainable.

This summer marks a significant milestone in Afghanistan, as the Afghan National Security Forces have taken the security lead across the country. We have also seen positive progress in local administrations assuming civilian responsibilities and in the reconciliation process. It is important that the preparations for the elections be on track and that the necessary legal and institutional frameworks have been adopted. Free and fair elections are paramount to the political transition and to consolidating democracy in Afghanistan. We hope that the Afghan authorities shall continue to give priority to election preparations, including ensuring inclusive participation of all eligible

population groups and providing security during the election period.

It is vital that the international community remain engaged in supporting Afghanistan's efforts throughout the transition phase and after 2014, and that the Afghans take due note of the long-term partnerships declared in Tokyo and Chicago. In that regard, the continuation of development cooperation and the full implementation of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework are fundamental. After the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission, the Afghan National Security Forces will still need advice, assistance and training. We hope that the modalities for further cooperation between NATO and Afghanistan will be defined in the coming months. Furthermore, the role of the international community, in particular that of the United Nations, in assisting the elections preparation process is essential.

Estonia remains committed to supporting Afghanistan during and after the transition period. Estonia, as one of the highest per capita contributors to ISAF, has been a long-term partner with Afghanistan. In order to support the Afghan Government in safeguarding the elections, our contingent will stay on the ground until the end of the election period. Our experts currently participate in the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan and NATO training missions, and we are ready and willing to contribute to training and financing Afghan security forces after 2014.

Afghanistan is also a priority country for Estonia in development cooperation, as we believe that there is no durable solution for Afghanistan involving only a military component. As Estonia itself has been a recipient of development assistance, we believe that we can contribute with our knowledge and experience of where aid is most needed and expected by the locals. That is the reason why we focus mainly on the promotion of health care, rule of law, the empowerment of women and education in Afghanistan. For instance, Kabul University is currently establishing three master's programmes in the field of information technology with the support of University of Tallinn.

Estonia pays careful attention to the protection of human rights, in particular to the rights of women and children. Human rights awareness-raising campaigns and education are instrumental in eliminating gender stereotypes. We also call upon the Afghan authorities to fully adhere to universal human rights and their pledge

to continue balanced development and empowerment of all social groups, with special focus on the most vulnerable groups, namely, women and children.

It is hard to underestimate the role the United Nations and its bodies have been playing in Afghanistan; that role is only likely to increase as they continue to support and strengthen Afghan capacities.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the Special Representative of the European Union for Afghanistan.

**Mr. Mellbin:** I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland, Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Norway, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2013/535), Special Representative Ján Kubiš for his briefing and Ambassador Tanin for his encouraging remarks.

The EU acknowledges and supports the important work of Special Representative Ján Kubiš and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in building a constructive relationship with the Government of Afghanistan. The political role of UNAMA in advising and assisting the Afghan Government is of central importance, especially in the context of the upcoming elections and in support of the peace and reconciliation process.

We reiterate our firm commitment to Afghanistan and the Afghan people and the long-term partnership agreed between the Government of Afghanistan and the international community in Chicago and Tokyo last year. In the context of that long-term partnership, the EU is working to finalize the negotiations on the EU-Afghanistan cooperation agreement on partnership and development. The EU and its member States currently give more than €1 billion a year in development assistance to Afghanistan.

The full implementation of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework remains paramount to achieving a successful transition in Afghanistan. Good progress has been made in some areas, notably in establishing a legislative framework for the forthcoming elections. But more needs to be done to tackle corruption, promote economic growth, strengthen the rule of law and safeguard human rights. The United Nations has a critical leadership role to play

in enabling the international community to work ever more effectively together and with the Government to fulfil commitments made in Tokyo. In our statement today, we want to focus on the important role Afghanistan's institutions have to play in safeguarding progress to date and providing the platform for growth and development.

The presidential and provincial elections in April 2014 will mark a historic moment in Afghanistan. It will be the first time that there has been a democratic transition of power. Progress in establishing the legislative framework for the elections has been impressive, and we commend the relevant Afghan bodies for the steps taken.

We welcome the selection and appointment of the new members of the Independent Election Commission and of the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission. Those institutions will be important in embedding democratic processes in Afghanistan. It is vital that the needed technical and logistical elements be put in place to guarantee their effective and autonomous workings.

We urge the Afghan authorities to continue to give priority to the preparations for presidential and provincial elections. In particular, we stress the importance of appropriate measures, both to ensure security for voters and officials and to promote women's participation. Those elements will be instrumental for inclusive and transparent elections with a legitimate outcome. The European Union and its member States will continue to engage fully with the process over the coming months. Financial and technical support is being provided through the United Nations Development Programme's electoral assistance programme, ELECT II.

The EU believes that the rule of law is critical to Afghanistan's development. We are supporting the creation of an effective justice system underpinned by a civilian police force and other rule of law institutions. Recently, the EU's police mission, European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan, was extended until the end of 2014 and will continue supporting the Afghan national police. But it is impossible for the institutions of justice to contribute to the rule of law if the most senior positions are occupied by officers whose terms have long expired. We therefore call upon the Government of Afghanistan to take action to appoint the Chief Justice and other members of the Supreme Court, in line with the provisions of the Constitution.

The rule of law is also critical to the full implementation of the statutory provisions relating to human rights, and, in particular, the rights of women. It is imperative that the Government of Afghanistan address widespread discrimination against women and girls.

Institutions have an important role to play in promoting human rights. The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission is an important institution in that respect. We welcome the commitment of the Afghan Government to retaining the “A” status, and trust that the Government will take appropriate action based on the advice of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, provided during her recent visit to Afghanistan, and the recommendations of the upcoming review by the International Coordination Committee of National Human Rights Institutions.

Making effective Government evident to all Afghans is vital to retaining and increasing support for the State. The transparent flow of public funds at the national and local levels is the backbone of a functioning State. Afghanistan needs to take action to both implement the constitutional framework of Government at all levels across the country and to clarify the responsibilities of different levels of the State where some doubt exists. This process is particularly important as the provincial reconstruction teams gradually hand over their responsibilities. Addressing these issues offers the chance of strengthening the accountability of the Government to the Afghan people and increasing local peoples’ participation and involvement in all layers of the State.

In addition to strengthening State institutions, we all recognize the opportunity that would be provided by an inclusive peace and reconciliation process. We call on all regional Governments to use their influence to encourage all groups to support an Afghan-led peace. Increased regional cooperation has a key role to play in supporting peace. We reiterate our support to the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation and continue our active support to the Heart of Asia process. We look forward to the Heart of Asia senior officials meeting here in New York on Monday.

With the fifth and final tranche of the security transition, Afghanistan formally assumed lead security responsibility nationwide. The Afghan National Security Forces have managed to retain control of key areas, but gains are fragile and come at a price. The Afghan

National Security Forces have sustained considerable losses in 2013 and still experience high attrition rates. We emphasize the importance of the ongoing efforts to develop and put in place a mechanism which ensures the financing of the Afghan National Security Forces after 2014. Such a mechanism must be coherent, transparent, accountable, sustainable and effective while at the same time fulfilling the principle of Afghan ownership and sovereignty. We urge all parties, international partners and the Afghan Government alike, to embrace and advance this crucial work.

Afghanistan’s institutions have a critical role to play in ensuring that the transition is successful and that the progress made is safeguarded and forms a basis for Afghanistan’s future peace, security, growth and development. The EU and its member States will continue to support this process in order to promote the emergence of a fully self-reliant, peaceful, democratic and prosperous society for the benefit of all Afghans.

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

**Mr. Umemoto (Japan):** At the outset, I thank Special Representative Ján Kubiš for his informative briefing today. I would further like to express my highest respect to all the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their deep commitment and dedication to their challenging assignment. I also thank Ambassador Tanin for his participation and for his statement.

Afghanistan has traveled a long and difficult path leading up to the current three significant transitions — political, economic and security. The smooth transfer of power in a peaceful and transparent manner is essential to a successful political transition, which will serve as a foundation for the other two transitions. In that regard, I wish to commend the Government and the people of Afghanistan for the tangible progress made towards the presidential and provincial elections to be held in 2014. Among the other concrete steps taken, the enactment of the two critical electoral legal frameworks has particular significance for conducting credible and inclusive elections. We also hope that the current intensive discussions among numerous political parties will create a good environment for the process towards a fair Afghan-led election, and look forward to seeing the outcome of the nomination process of candidates. I would like to express Japan’s serious intention to join in the efforts of

the international community to lend its support in this process through the ELECT II programme.

While improvements have been made, the security situation continues to be of concern. In order to encourage the full participation of all eligible voters, security challenges must be properly addressed. Japan encourages the Government of Afghanistan to take appropriate risk-mitigation measures based on a realistic security assessment.

Over the longer term, an Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process, backed by good-neighbourly relations, is the most important task for the legitimate Afghan Government. In that regard, Japan welcomes the recent summit meeting between Afghan President Karzai and Pakistani Prime Minister Sharif. It was encouraging to hear the positive messages from the Pakistani leader regarding his support for the ongoing peace process, which were followed by the release of additional Taliban members. I would like to stress once again Japan's continuous support for Afghan-led peace and stability.

In order to ensure smooth and successful political and economic transitions, the timely implementation of the commitments in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework is of paramount importance. The senior officials meeting in Kabul on 3 July provided us with a valuable opportunity to assess the status of commitments and refocus our efforts towards a stable and prosperous Afghanistan. Japan expects the Afghan Government to redouble its efforts, especially in the areas of anti-corruption, public finance, the rule of law and women's rights.

As Japan has repeatedly expressed, the key is mutuality. While the international community is expected to provide Afghanistan with credibility and predictability in terms of its future assistance, the Afghan Government is strongly encouraged to further its own efforts to improve governance and implement faithfully its growth strategy. Japan will continue to be engaged in the follow-up process until the final goal of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework is met by both Afghanistan and its international partners.

Turning to the security situation, Japan condemns in the strongest terms the brutal terrorist attacks that have caused the tragic loss of innocent lives all over the country, including assaults against international aid agencies, as well as diplomatic facilities. As a strong supporter of the protection and empowerment of women

in Afghanistan in various fields, Japan expresses its serious concerns about the recent intimidation and targeted killings of female Afghan Government officials and public figures.

We welcome the Security Council press statement (SC/11122) on the attack on the United States Consulate in Herat last Friday and I join my colleagues in condemning any acts of violence and expressing our determination to fight terrorism.

The security transition is broadly on track and we must not let any terrorist act divert it from its path. As mentioned in the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/535), despite this difficult security environment, we have witnessed the increased competence and confidence of the Afghan National Security Forces in conducting most operations. Challenges continue to exist, but the international community must remain united alongside Afghanistan in combating by all means the threats posed by any illegal armed groups.

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

**Mr. Wittig (Germany):** At the outset, I would like to welcome the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš. I extend my thanks to him for his briefing and for his team's dedicated work in support of the Afghan people. I also appreciate Ambassador Tanin's presence with the Council today.

My Government aligns itself with the statement just delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Afghanistan has taken major steps on its path of political and security transition over recent months. At the Tokyo Conference, the Government of Afghanistan and the international community reaffirmed their long-term partnership and agreed on the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. Germany considers the comprehensive and timely implementation of the Framework to be key in achieving a peaceful and prosperous future for Afghanistan. It is also paramount in securing the continued support of the international community. Those mutual commitments were reaffirmed at the senior officials' meeting held in Kabul on 3 July. Since then, further progress has been achieved in many areas.

We particularly welcome the establishment of a legislative framework for the presidential and provincial elections to be held in April 2014. The appointment of new members to the Independent Election Commission

and the Independent Election Complaints Commission has been another decisive step. We are now awaiting the announcements of candidates who will run in those historic elections, which will result in a peaceful transfer of power. On the other hand, more remains to be done to ensure that the elections are transparent, credible and inclusive, in particular regarding the participation of women in the election process. Germany will further support Afghanistan in its continued preparations for the elections and will contribute overall more than \$14 million to that end.

While focusing on the preparations for the elections, we must not forget that there are many other challenges ahead for Afghanistan. Preserving and consolidating gains in the protection and promotion of human rights is of the utmost importance. Sustained action to implement statutory safeguards, first and foremost the Law on the Elimination of Violence against Women, is a key requirement in that regard. Furthermore, we are confident that the Government of Afghanistan will continue to ensure the independence of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission according to Afghan law and the Paris Principles.

The most recent visit of President Karzai to Pakistan and the subsequent release of members of the Taliban from prisons in Pakistan open up new opportunities in the peace and reconciliation process. We encourage all sides to further pursue the path of an Afghan-led and -owned peace process, despite potential setbacks ahead, as we believe that there is no reasonable alternative.

The Afghan security forces continue to face serious challenges. That is demonstrated by the attack on the United States Consulate General in Herat last Friday and the killing of the chief of the Independent Election Commission in Kunduz yesterday. Germany condemns those heinous terrorist attacks in the strongest terms. Germany remains confident, however, that, with evolving but persistent international support, the Afghan security forces will continue to prove capable of responding to such challenges.

Let me conclude by underlining that Germany will continue to support the Government of Afghanistan, including after 2014. Our particular focus will remain on the implementation of the mutual commitments stemming from the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework.

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

**Mr. Çevik (Turkey):** I would like to begin my statement by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš for his comprehensive briefing, and Ambassador Tanin for his words.

We continue to welcome the positive signs coming from Afghanistan. The assumption of full security responsibilities by Afghanistan, the momentum achieved in preparation for the 2014 elections with the agreement on key legislation, the positive signs in terms of the country's engagement with its neighbours and the significant progress in the operationalization of the Istanbul Process are promising developments. Yet, we must remain cautious and vigilant.

Political, economic and security challenges remain. The transition is marked by uncertainty. The number of casualties among Afghan security forces and civilians is rising. The future of the peace process is unclear. Natural disasters, epidemic diseases, drought and chronic poverty pose grave humanitarian threats. The most vulnerable segments of society, especially children, women, girls and elderly people, continue to be at risk.

It is essential to remain in touch with those realities on the ground. I would like to touch upon four buzzwords that we deem important for the future of Afghanistan.

The first is local ownership. We strongly welcome recent announcements by Afghanistan indicating a clear desire to assume responsibility for its own future in security, the economy, electoral processes and human rights.

The second, capacity-building, complements local ownership. Achieving good governance and the rule of law is key to a successful transition. Free, fair and accountable elections in 2014 should be backed by efficient institutions. An inclusive and comprehensive peace and reconciliation process, owned and led by Afghans, is also necessary.

International support to Afghanistan must continue. As Afghanistan's regional and international partners, we should spare no effort to contribute to a secure, peaceful and self-sufficient Afghanistan. That is in our mutual interest.

Finally, transforming the heart of Asia into a zone of peace, stability and prosperity requires strong regional commitment. As international forces are withdrawn, regional cooperation gains have increased

the importance of achieving sustainable peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan and beyond. Further connectivity will facilitate economic development, stability and self-sustainability and help create a more favourable business environment in Afghanistan. The region must come together to transform common problems into mutual interests. In that regard, we welcome the momentum in the Istanbul Process and appreciate China's offer to host the next ministerial conference next year. We are also grateful for the pledges made by supporters of the Istanbul Process and are convinced that their practical implementation will help to operationalize the Process even further. We also welcome trilateral and quadrilateral initiatives and the constructive role played by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in support of Afghanistan.

Turkey will always remain in solidarity with the Afghan people and continue to contribute to a safe, secure and prosperous Afghanistan, as we have done for many decades.

In concluding my statement, I would like to voice our strong belief that the United Nations will continue to play its crucial role during and after the transition. I would particularly like to commend the valuable efforts of the United Nations — and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in particular — and express our heartfelt gratitude to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Kubiš and his hard-working team.

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

**Mr. Ružička (Slovakia):** Let me align myself with the statement delivered by European Union Special Representative Mellbin on behalf of the European Union.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2013/535), and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš for his briefing. Both the statement and the report reflect a number of important elements, many of which are of a positive nature.

It is important for all of us not to lose sight of the situation in Afghanistan, even as we face a complex and dangerous security situation in Syria and the Middle East. Past experience teaches us that when we leave jobs unfinished, the next developments often bring about very bitter and painful results.

While the overall security situation in Afghanistan remains a concern, not only for citizens of Afghanistan but also for the international community, we are encouraged by efforts aimed at strengthening the capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces in protecting the most vulnerable civilian groups. It is essential to continue the training of Afghan security and police forces to further reduce the number of attacks from within the uniformed ranks.

The Slovak Republic is fully committed to assisting the Afghan forces after the final stage of the security transition. I am pleased to inform the Council that the Slovak National Council renewed the mandate of Slovak personnel in Afghanistan, which should create the basis for our military engagement beyond 2014.

Security will be cardinal in Afghan-lead preparations for the electoral cycle and the conduct of presidential and provincial elections scheduled to take place in April 2014. The progress made so far by the Afghan authorities in terms of establishing a legislative framework is significant. Further progress in reconciliation is vital for any further success. The complete inclusivity of talks reduces the risk of compromising the integrity of the 2014 elections. That risk would come at a high cost, bearing in mind the positive momentum and historic opportunity for the people of Afghanistan.

The process of peace and reconciliation must be led by Afghans, who can rely on the assistance of the international community and the good offices of UNAMA. Among the many examples of the extraordinary performance of this United Nations Mission, there is another new element: the beneficial influence of UNAMA on development in Afghanistan through increased regional cooperation. Without a doubt, the productive discussions between Afghanistan and Pakistan and the opportunities presented by Iran contribute to a promising future. All those activities are fully in line with the debate of the Security Council in August (see S/PV.7015) on the significance of regional cooperation, which was chaired by Her Excellency President Cristina Fernández of Argentina.

We believe that the central role of the United Nations remains one of the key factors in promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan. We fully support UNAMA's invaluable work in assisting Afghan-led processes.

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

**Mr. Rishchynski (Canada)** (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to address the Council. Let me also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his report. I also welcome Ambassador Tanin of Afghanistan.

In the months since our previous meeting (see S/PV.6983), we have seen the Afghan people — ever-resilient in the face of ongoing instability — planting their feet firmly on the path to democracy, prosperity, stability and peace. They are working to move forward into a better future for all Afghans. It is our fervent hope that their Government will reflect that very aspiration.

(*spoke in English*)

The upcoming 2014 elections present a historic opportunity to witness Afghanistan's first peaceful democratic transfer of power. It will be a vital step. The free and fair election of a Government with popular legitimacy is the best guarantor of stability in the coming years. A stable democracy requires institutions that are open, transparent and accountable to the people. Over the past three months, the Government of Afghanistan has taken steps to strengthen the foundation for such institutions. We welcome the passage of the electoral law and the Independent Election Commission (IEC) structure law, which have clarified the electoral process as well as the structure and mandate of Afghanistan's key electoral institutions. We also welcome the appointment of commissioners to the IEC and to the Electoral Complaints Commission. As the campaign process gets under way, we expect the Afghan Government to provide those institutions with the resources and independence that they need to fulfil their mandates, including the full vetting of candidates and the investigation of all complaints of electoral meddling or fraud. To succeed, it will be essential for all eligible Afghans, especially women, to have an opportunity to exercise their democratic rights.

A stable democracy also requires Government institutions and a strong civil society that are committed to protecting the rights of the most vulnerable, especially women and girls, in Afghanistan. At the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework senior officials meeting in July, Canada acknowledged the appointment of nine commissioners to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC). As the AIHRC prepares for its review by the International Coordinating

Committee of National Human Rights Institutions in November, we urge the commissioners to remain vocal in pressing for greater respect for human rights throughout Afghanistan, including the rights of women and girls, and greater protection for freedom of speech, religion and belief.

The Afghan Government needs to work to uphold its human rights commitments, which its people expect. Two issues in particular will be critical this fall. First, we urge the Government of Afghanistan to exert all possible efforts to support the AIHRC to ensure it retains its "A" status. Secondly, Afghan women and girls continue to await progress on the implementation of the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) law and the publication of the Government of Afghanistan's report to its citizens on implementation of the law, which is a deliverable under the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework.

(*spoke in French*)

We recognize that there are those who seek to pull Afghanistan back from the path it is on, as witnessed by the relentless targeting of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). Yet the ANSF continues to demonstrate its professionalism and preparedness in responding to such attacks.

The past few months have also seen a marked increase in the number of attacks on civilians, including humanitarian workers, Government contractors and politicians, particularly women. Even in the face of such callous cruelty, however, the Afghan people have remained strong and are committed to the goal of rebuilding their country and ensuring that Afghanistan will never again be a safe haven for terrorists, and resist the proxy wars of its neighbours through terrorism.

(*spoke in English*)

There is no question that this path toward democracy, stability and peace is a long road and that there are many who would like to see Afghanistan reverse course. But Canada continues to support those who are working to build a better future in the face of those ongoing risks. We remain committed to helping move the country forward on this path towards greater security, fiscal stability, economic growth, improved governance and full respect for human rights. Canada is proud to have stood by our Afghan partners on that journey and we will continue to do so going forward.

**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 start by thanking Special Representative Ján Kubiš for his briefing and comprehensive report on the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and for his analysis of the current situation in that country. I also thank Ambassador Tanin for his informative statement to the Security Council. I also express my appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report (S/2013/535).

I would like to focus my comments today on some key areas related to the current situation in Afghanistan, namely, regional cooperation and other issues related to neighbouring countries, including Iran's relations with Afghanistan.

Turning first to regional cooperation, we believe that it is critical for achieving long-term stability and economic development in Afghanistan. The Islamic Republic of Iran is engaged in a number of important regional initiatives on Afghanistan that aim at greater regional connectivity to promote economic and commercial cooperation, as well as to root out the scourges of illicit narcotics, terrorism and extremism. We also welcome in particular regional initiatives such as the Heart of Asia process and the adoption of plans on confidence-building measures between Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries, which surely could serve as a good basis for further cooperation at the regional level. The Islamic Republic of Iran is an active participant in the Heart of Asia process and Istanbul Process. In the economic field, international and regional partners should concentrate their efforts at laying the foundations for sustainable economic growth and better conditions for livelihoods in Afghanistan. For that purpose, there is a need for accelerated progress on economic cooperation with regional and international partners in accordance with the national objectives set forth by Afghan Government.

The newly elected Government in the Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to consolidate and expand its relations with its neighbours, including Afghanistan, with which we share religious, linguistic and cultural commonalities. That provides an opportunity for Afghanistan to count on Iran and other neighbouring countries in dealing with challenges such as insecurity, the lack of infrastructure, narcotic drugs and issues related to refugees, which remain to be resolved.

We have continued our dialogue with the Afghan authorities on bilateral cooperation, particularly in relation to increasing cooperation on security matters and counter-narcotics efforts. During President Karzai's attendance at the inauguration of President Rouhani on 4 August, a memorandum of understanding on strategic cooperation between Iran's Supreme National Security Council and the National Security Council of Afghanistan was signed. The memorandum covers issues of mutual interest, including intelligence-sharing, in combating security threats such as terrorism, narcotics and organized crime. We welcome the Triangular Initiative on cooperation on countering narcotics. The initiative provides the basis for better coordination of joint operations among border liaison offices, communications and the exchange of information in combating narcotic drugs.

The *World Drug Report 2013*, released on 26 June, highlights the rise in poppy cultivation by 15 per cent in 2012 at the global level, an important part of which is produced in Afghanistan. This makes it clear that the narcotic drugs problem remains one of the serious challenges that Afghanistan is facing. This menace has hindered the advancement of the country towards development and has placed the security of Afghanistan and the region in danger.

As is rightly underlined in the report of the Secretary-General, there is an interconnection among the challenges regarding a successful transfer of political authority through elections and peace and reconciliation efforts, on the one hand, and the impact of the increasing mobility of extremist groups, the readiness of national security forces, and rising narcotics production and trafficking, on the other. Moreover, narcotic drugs trafficking, as the financial source of terrorism, has provided a breeding ground for terrorists, extremists and illegal groups that attempt to destabilize the Afghan Government.

Undoubtedly, the increase in poppy cultivation in Afghanistan in the past and this year plays an important role in spreading terrorism and insecurity in Afghanistan. The continued increase in poppy cultivation and drug trafficking in Afghanistan indicates that preventive measures have not yielded the expected results and that the international community has unfortunately failed to curb this menace so far. We strongly believe that those who bear the responsibility to combat narcotic drugs on behalf of the international community should consider more robust projects

regarding the elimination of poppy cultivation and preventing narcotic traffic and the proceeds emanating therefrom.

In that regard, my country hosted the seventh regional Financial Intelligence Unit meeting on July 2013 to enhance regional cooperation in tackling money-laundering and suspicious financial transactions. The aim of the meeting was to develop a common instrument to improve information exchange on suspicious transactions, and to address the problem of profits of drug trafficking. A regional training session on anti-money-laundering, illegal financial flows and suspect cash transactions was also held in Tehran from 30 June to 3 July, with the participation of experts from the countries of the region. We hope that such initiatives will bear fruitful results.

As our officials reiterated during their bilateral meetings with Mr. Kubiš during his recent visit to Tehran, there is a strong desire for constructive engagement with the international community on issues of mutual interest, including Afghanistan. The central

role of the United Nations in coordinating international and regional efforts to improve the situation in Afghanistan, especially in the post-2014 era, was once more reiterated.

In conclusion, we support UNAMA in fulfilling its mission to provide assistance in promoting peace and the reconstruction of the country within its mandate and through the robust regional engagement of neighbouring countries on issues such as border security, immigration, refugees and drug control. The role of UNAMA should evolve on the basis of the situation on the ground, emerging realities and, above all, the aspirations of the people of Afghanistan. We wish every success towards an independent, stable, peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan free from terrorism, extremism.

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

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*