



Security Council

Sixty-eighth year

Provisional

7085th meeting

Tuesday, 17 December 2013, 10 a.m.

New York

President: Mr. Lamek (France)

Members:

Argentina	Mr. Oyarzábal
Australia	Mr. Quinlan
Azerbaijan	Mr. Mehdiyev
China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
Morocco	Mr. Loulichki
Pakistan	Mr. Masood Khan
Republic of Korea	Mr. Oh Joon
Russian Federation	Mr. Pankin
Rwanda	Mr. Nduhungirehe
Togo	Mr. Kandangha-Bariki
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
United States of America	Mrs. DiCarlo

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2013/721)

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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/2013/721)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, Canada, Germany, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan 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 Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2013/721, 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: When I was last here three months ago in September (see S/PV.7035), I highlighted the positive trajectory as Afghanistan undergoes ambitious security, political and economic transitions. Today I can reiterate that progress continues and efforts are by and large on track, although not without challenges and temporary setbacks and at a heavy cost in life and limb to Afghan and international soldiers. I would like to express my condolences over the deaths of six NATO soldiers who were killed today in a plane crash in southern Afghanistan.

Yes, there is volatility. There is uncertainty. However, the fundamental elements required to enhance stability in Afghanistan and the wider region

are being consolidated as the drawdown of international forces continues. The consultative loya jirga's recent endorsement of the bilateral security agreement between Afghanistan and the United States reinforced the widespread expectations for the finalization of that important framework for ongoing partnership and, by extension, continuity in broader international engagement.

Predictability is critical to building confidence in the future. We must resolutely continue working together to ensure a sovereign and sustainable State that will never again become a haven for international terrorism and organized crime, including, notably, narco-business. This is in everyone's interest.

The critical importance of holding credible polls on time and in full accordance with the Constitution is widely appreciated. Technical preparations and political momentum for the agreed election day of 5 April remain on track and are further advanced than previous polls. The security challenges are real and should be proactively and realistically addressed in order to promote maximum inclusion and avoid any pretext for disenfranchisement or delay. This includes transparency on the location and status of polling centres, with important decisions to be made in the coming period.

The polls and the surrounding political environment should also contribute to national unity and not enflame or exacerbate tensions, including ethnic or sectarian divisions. Observation efforts — not just on election day but of the environment leading up to polling and the compilation of results — can strengthen confidence. I urge Member States, together with regional and multilateral organizations, to contribute to efforts in this regard.

Afghanistan's regional relationships and establishing its rightful place in a cooperative neighbourhood will be the best guarantors of future stability and sustainability both for Afghanistan and its neighbours. I particularly welcome the positive momentum in relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The recent high-level visits are an important demonstration of mutual willingness to build trust and cooperation in all spheres of mutual interest. I was encouraged by the recent reception of Afghanistan's High Peace Council at the highest levels in Islamabad. There is now broad recognition across the region that political solutions will be key to sustainable peace, security and prosperity.

The Istanbul Heart of Asia process continues to demonstrate potential in enhancing multilateral relationships and regional approaches on Afghanistan. Recent progress in talks on the Iranian nuclear programme in Geneva is being closely followed in Kabul as potentially contributing to an environment more conducive to peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region, as well.

In my meetings with the leaderships of Afghanistan's neighbours and regional partners, I heard concerns centred around current uncertainties. This included the potential for volatility post-2014 if there is a vacuum that could encourage the spread of Al-Qaeda-linked international terrorism and criminality, with implications across the region. Most immediately, another record-setting year of poppy cultivation and production in Afghanistan — resulting in some 5,500 tons of opium — is of grave concern. This menace threatens the health, security and economic well-being not just of Afghanistan but also of the region and the wider international community.

It is civilians who continue to bear the brunt of the conflict. By the end of November, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) had recorded 2,730 deaths and 5,169 injuries — a 10 per cent increase over the same period in 2012. The Mission's data continues to show that armed opposition groups are responsible for the vast majority of such casualties. As Afghan forces assume the security lead, this brings with it increased responsibilities for ensuring the protection of civilians. Working to build understanding of human rights obligations, together with promoting the transparency and accountability of Afghan security institutions, should be an important element of international training and assistance going forward.

Humanitarian needs will likely increase. Afghanistan remains a country of chronic poverty, which exacerbates vulnerability to natural disasters and conflict. Winter is an additional stress. Even as such needs increase, so do the dangers to those seeking to assist. So far in 2013, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has recorded 237 incidents against humanitarian personnel, facilities and assets, including 36 deaths, 24 detentions, 46 injuries and 72 abductions. The Security Council has already expressed its strong condemnation of two particularly tragic incidents in this period. On behalf of the humanitarian community in Afghanistan, I express my deep gratitude for that.

Continued momentum in the development agenda is required to ensure continuity and progress throughout the upcoming political transition. In taking stock of progress on the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework and in building a forward-looking agenda, arrangements are currently being finalized for a special Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board meeting on 29 January 2014.

Some areas, such as elections, have seen encouraging results, but greater efforts are needed in others, such as the implementation of the law on the elimination of violence against women. UNAMA's latest reporting has found that Afghan authorities registered more reports of violence against women under the law over the past year, but that prosecutions and convictions remained low. Increased levels of reporting are a positive development, but must be met by real will to enforce legal prohibitions on harmful practices against women, including the prosecution of perpetrators.

The role of UNAMA, and more broadly of the United Nations in Afghanistan, appears to be widely appreciated. A need for greater internal United Nations coherence and efficiencies is recognized. Assistance must be delivered in ways that reinforce and strengthen the capacity of Afghan institutions to deliver services to their people, in line with agreed national priorities. This includes increasingly integrated efforts across the United Nations family in support of comprehensive approaches to tackling the illicit economy and improved coherence in the delivery of justice and enhancing the rule of law.

While not seeking in any way to pre-empt Council discussions on a future mandate, at this juncture I foresee the continued need for an integrated mission streamlined around core areas, namely, good offices in support of Afghan-led processes, leading development coherence among international stakeholders, and human rights monitoring and advocacy, including a particular focus on the rights of women and children, as well as humanitarian assistance.

I thank Council members for their clear statements in previous debates supporting stability in UNAMA's resourcing in the coming biennium. The budget must necessarily be informed by the mandate, which remains extensive and complex. In particular, I would like to highlight the value of the Mission's national footprint, which is a unique network. Our field offices are essential to mandated elections work and human rights

monitoring in particular. Reductions in funding would most likely, and most unfortunately, require additional closures.

Essential elements of Afghanistan's transition are coalescing and efforts remain generally on track. The key at this delicate time is enhancing predictability. We must remain patient and not waver in our determination, ensuring that mutual efforts remain firmly focused on strategic interests and ultimate goals shared by both Afghans and the international community.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Kubiš for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): I would like to thank you, Sir, for your leadership of the Council for the month of December. I take this moment also to welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2013/721) and to thank our dear friend, Special Representative Kubiš, for his presence today and his able leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

Our meeting here this December, 12 years to the month since leaders of Afghanistan's political parties signed the Bonn Agreement, is a lucid reminder of the progress in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban regime. December evokes the hopeful atmosphere of Bonn in the winter of 2001, when unity was in sight, emergence from the shadow of violence and fanaticism seemed possible and the vision of an Afghanistan as a home for all — one of tolerance and moderation — was taking shape.

We have made significant progress since those days and have seen many of our objectives come to fruition. More than 6 million Afghan refugees have returned to the country after being forced to live outside their homes for years due to war and conflict. Our State is now based on a democratic Constitution. Millions of Afghans have access to education and health care. And the Afghan people enjoy more freedom and rights than they have for decades. Although we face challenges and continue to engage those who seek to reverse our progress, we are advancing apace to stand independently, take command of our future and realize a peaceful and secure Afghanistan.

This year in particular has been pivotal to the advancement of our goals and the solidification of our

achievements. The year 2013 marks the culmination of transition, paving the way for Afghanistan to embark upon the transformation decade. Since June, the Afghan National Security Forces have assumed full responsibility for security nationwide, proving themselves ever more capable of defending the country and doing so with confidence and determination.

As 2013 comes to a end, Afghans look ahead to the transformation decade. That milestone signifies Afghanistan's progress towards sustainable peace and marks the start of a new phase of cooperation with the international community. In the past year, we have renewed our international partnerships and signed a number of strategic partnership agreements with several countries, including the United States. In May of last year, President Karzai and President Obama signed the Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement. That was followed by 15 months of comprehensive negotiations on, and then the completion of, the text of the bilateral security agreement.

Last month in Kabul, 2,500 Afghan representatives endorsed that agreement during a consultative loya jirga. The resolution adopted at the end of the Jirga reaffirmed that the agreement should ensure Afghanistan's peace, security and development and should be accompanied by visible steps taken on specific issues in the lead-up to the signing of the agreement. As reiterated by the leadership of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, those entail assurances for measures to end the military raids on Afghan homes, and the launching of negotiations between the Afghan High Peace Council and the Taliban. We are certain that the bilateral security agreement will be signed in a timely manner. As a next step, Afghanistan is ready to begin formal negotiations on a status of forces agreement for the post-2014 NATO presence in Afghanistan, which will continue our enduring security and defence partnership with NATO.

We are preparing for our next milestone, namely, presidential and provincial council elections. The timely holding of transparent, free and fair elections is a reflection of strong national consensus about the future direction of Afghanistan and its status as a democratic, peaceful and prosperous nation. To that end, technical and logistical preparations are proceeding with momentum. The Independent Election Commission has announced the final list of 11 presidential candidates and their running mates. More than 3 million new voters have registered for the elections, of which one

third are women. That number is expected to increase in the lead-up to elections. As we move towards the final stage of preparations, Afghan national security institutions have put in place a comprehensive strategy to ensure security on election day.

Afghanistan's peaceful future requires a political solution to the conflict. Reaching out to the armed opposition, building confidence and engaging in peace talks remain central to our efforts towards peace and stability. In spite of some setbacks, we are working to renew momentum in the peace process. In that regard, the Government has been continually involved at the regional level, launching a new phase of dialogue between Afghanistan's and Pakistan's leadership through bilateral and trilateral meetings in London, Kabul and Islamabad. We are fully committed to the success of reconciliation, and we are conscious that further progress depends upon not only the dedicated efforts of all stakeholders but also the opposition's united voice for peace.

Alongside security and political transition, in the light of the withdrawal of international forces at the end of 2014, we are strengthening regional understanding and cooperation to ensure the success of Afghanistan's transition. In recent months, we have ramped up efforts to increase contact with neighbours and countries in the region. President Karzai has engaged with regional leaders to enhance development and security cooperation, focusing on transition and beyond, in New Delhi, Islamabad, Beijing, Dushanbe and Tehran, as well as at the Shanghai Cooperation Summit in Bishkek. The leaders agreed that they had a strategic stake in Afghanistan and that peace and stability in the country were essential to peace and stability in the region. As we move forward, we will benefit from all forms of cooperation, particularly the Istanbul Process.

As we proceed steadily towards the transformation decade, it is essential that the successes of the past 12 years be maintained. Progress depends upon preserving the rights of all Afghans, particularly women and girls, upholding the rule of law and furthering economic transition. Our continuing partnership with the international community is critical to success in those areas, as reflected in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. We are determined to meet our related commitments and we hope that the international community will be similarly steadfast in its promises to Afghanistan.

Speaking today at this December meeting of the Council, mindful of our recent and future milestones and of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, I again recall the spirit of Bonn. We knew during that December 12 years ago that the challenges in front of us were great. But we were also aware of the tremendous potential for change and for the establishment of a stable, peaceful, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan. As we arrive at 2014, we ground our progress firmly in the constitutional foundations established 12 years ago, in the spirit of hope and optimism that was alive in Bonn, and with commitment to build upon and maintain the great achievements of the past decade.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): I thank Special Representative Ján Kubiš for his leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and all United Nations personnel in Afghanistan for their dedication. I also thank Afghanistan's Permanent Representative, Ambassador Zahir Tanin, for his persuasive engagement in New York.

International and Afghan forces have made significant progress in improving security throughout Afghanistan over the past decade. We have reduced Al-Qaida's capacity to prepare and launch terrorist attacks. And we have reduced the Taliban's control of territory, which provided sanctuary to Al-Qaida and affiliated terrorist groups.

Progress on the security front has created conditions in which basic services such as health and education are being delivered, and for sustainable economic and social development over the longer term. That was the first fighting season with the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) in the lead for security across the country. The ANSF now conducts 95 per cent of conventional operations and 100 per cent of the planning.

In Uruzgan, where Australia's military and reconstruction efforts have been focused, the ANSF have now assumed responsibility for security but Australia will continue to support the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in 2014 through the provision of trainers and advisers in Kabul and Kandahar and embeds to ISAF headquarters.

Post-2014, Australia remains committed to the NATO-led training, advice and assistance mission. But a key consideration for Australia will be the

legal arrangements. An agreed bilateral security agreement between Afghanistan and the United States is a precondition for an Australian commitment post-2014. We welcome the loya jirga's endorsement of that agreement and urge its prompt signing.

The international community will view credible, inclusive and transparent elections in 2014 as a decisive milestone. It is a core commitment under the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework.

We acknowledge the important support role that the United Nations is playing in preparing for elections and in encouraging an electoral process that includes all sectors of the population and maximizes participation, especially by women. Australia itself is helping to build more effective electoral institutions and increased voter participation through civic awareness.

Further progress by the Afghan Government against the reform priorities jointly identified and agreed at the Tokyo conference is vital to Afghanistan's goal of self-reliance, as well as the international community's ability to sustain unprecedented levels of support. The United Nations itself has played a critical role in supporting Afghanistan's development and will continue to do so following security transition.

On human rights, Afghanistan must not lose the gains of the past 12 years. In particular, the law on the elimination of violence against women must be implemented fully, and we encourage Afghanistan to finalize and implement a national action plan on women, peace and security. We also urge the continued protection of all persons, including children, media workers and detainees. And we condemn attacks against humanitarian and development workers, which have become more frequent.

Australia supports an Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process. We welcome the commitment of Afghanistan and Pakistan to work together on the peace process. As Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), we are promoting the role of the Taliban sanctions regime in facilitating that process.

I should note that, as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2013* highlights, Afghanistan's narcotics industry is a major threat to stability, helps fund the insurgency and undermines governance. As we know, there is no quick fix solution. It requires a comprehensive approach that includes effective security measures, law enforcement

and the creation of viable alternative livelihoods. It needs to be Afghan-led and fully supported by local authorities and communities.

The Security Council's continued support for Afghanistan is essential. As Security Council coordinator and the pen holder on Afghanistan, Australia is now focused on securing a strong mandate for UNAMA in March next year. We very carefully note the Secretary-General's recommendations on UNAMA's future role. We will work with partners to ensure that a renewed mandate has the backing of the Afghan Government and is appropriately resourced to ensure UNAMA is able to fulfil its role.

In conclusion, as the Secretary-General notes, Afghanistan is entering its final year of political and security transition in an environment of uncertainty. But the international community is importantly committed to assisting the Afghan Government to ensure the hard-won gains of the past decade for the women, men and children of Afghanistan are not reversed. Afghanistan must seize the opportunity before it, and we have the hope and optimism it will and is doing so, to consolidate the foundations for a stable, secure and prosperous nation.

Mr. Nduhugirehe (Rwanda) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first of all to thank Mr. Ján Kubiš, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing and leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). At the same time, I thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations, for his statement.

Rwanda appreciates the considerable progress made by Afghanistan in the past few years, in particular in the security, economic and political areas. That said, the transition in Afghanistan still faces many challenges, including the very worrying security and humanitarian situation and the opium cultivation. Indeed, the security of civilians and humanitarian workers, as noted by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2013/721), is of great concern.

Along those lines, my delegation firmly condemns the attacks in Uruzgan province on 26 November and in Faryab province on 27 November, which led to the death of nine humanitarian workers. We call on the Afghan Government to do its utmost to ensure that the perpetrators of those crimes are held accountable.

The Afghan Government has made definite progress in preparing for next year's presidential and

provincial council elections. Rwanda is pleased to note the inclusion of women on the electoral lists as candidates and election officers. We regret, however, that there was no qualified female candidate for the presidential election. The increased participation of women will contribute to the legitimacy and transparency of the electoral process. That is why we call on the Afghan National Security Forces to take the necessary security measures so as to allow women to enjoy their political rights and to vote independently in inclusive, transparent and credible elections.

Rwanda notes its deep concern about the rise in the opium production in Afghanistan, a drug that has serious consequences for the health of consumers as well as the security, stability and development of the country and the region. In that respect, we welcome the commitment of the Afghan Government and the initiatives of its international partners, in particular the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, to counter that scourge. Eradicating the cultivation of that drug requires a comprehensive and holistic approach as part of a long-term security, development and institution capacity-building strategy.

Improving relations and bolstering cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours on a wide range of issues, in particular those related to peace, reconciliation, regional security, development and humanitarian assistance, are crucial to lasting peace and stability in the region. In that context, we are pleased with the implementation of bilateral and multilateral cooperation frameworks between Afghanistan and its various regional partners.

We would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our call to United Nations Member States and the other development partners that made pledges at the various donor conferences to meet those commitments. We also encourage the international community to continue its partnership with the Afghan Government, in particular under the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework.

We would like to conclude by saying that Rwanda will continue to support the Afghan Government in completing the transition phase and over the transformation decade that is beginning. We reiterate our support for UNAMA and the United Nations agencies working to support the Afghan authorities in strengthening peace and stability and rebuilding the country through robust regional commitment, in particular with regard to border security and combating drugs.

Mr. Mehdiyev (Azerbaijan): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš, for his briefing on the situation in Afghanistan. Azerbaijan highly values his tireless work and the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in promoting peace and security in the country. I also thank Ambassador Tanin for his statement, which clearly outlines his Government's views and analysis of the latest processes concerning Afghanistan.

In just a couple of weeks, Afghanistan will enter a final and momentous year in its political and security transition. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/721) identifies progress in some areas during the period under review. It also depicts complex challenges that the country continues to face and the efforts undertaken by Afghanistan, with the support of the international community, to address them. In light of the difficulties of the transition period, it is critical to step up the implementation of mutual commitments between Afghanistan and its international partners. The international community should remain actively engaged in the long-term stabilization process in Afghanistan. Predictable assistance should be ensured to that end.

The year 2014 will signify several milestone events in the process of consolidating Afghanistan's sovereignty and national unity, which will determine the future of the country. In particular, the upcoming presidential and provincial council elections will further strengthen the political foundations of peace, stability and development in the country. We welcome important advancements and steps taken in the run-up to the elections, such as the finalization of the list of candidates and measures to encourage the registration of female candidates, promote voter inclusiveness and enhance the security of the electoral process. We join the Secretary-General's call on all parties to commit to a peaceful conduct of the elections and to respect the right of the Afghan people to exercise their vote.

Ensuring national peace and reconciliation constitutes a fundamental element of durable stability and unity in Afghanistan. The efforts undertaken by the Government in that regard, including through the outreach activities of the High Peace Council and the implementation of the Afghanistan peace and reconciliation programme, are commendable. At the same time, we note the lack of progress in the establishment of a formal peace process and underline

the necessity of creating the proper conditions for inclusive talks. This process must be based on the full respect for the Constitution of Afghanistan and must preserve the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned character. No attempts to undermine Afghanistan's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and to reverse its years-long democratic achievements must be allowed.

Afghanistan's strengthened dialogue and cooperation with its immediate neighbours and other regional counterparts on a wide range of issues, including peace and reconciliation, regional security challenges, economic development and humanitarian assistance, are essential for the peaceful and stable future of the country and the region. Having said this, we welcome Afghanistan's active interaction with its various partners within bilateral and multilateral frameworks.

We also stress the importance of the Istanbul Heart of Asia Process as a unique regional platform for dialogue and partnership aimed at promoting security, confidence and cooperation, with Afghanistan at its core. The effective realization of practical activities and projects within all six confidence-building measures requires thoroughly elaborated alternative funding modalities, and we look forward to receiving the results of an expert study at the next senior officials meeting, to be held in January in New Delhi.

Azerbaijan and Afghanistan share strategic and fraternal relations with solid bilateral cooperation. As the international security forces prepare to withdraw next year, Azerbaijan will continue to strengthen those relations by providing capacity-building assistance and training programmes to Afghanistan in many areas of mutual interest. Our long-time participation in the International Security Assistance Force and declared intention to partner with NATO in a post-2014 training, advice and assistance mission derive from our regional security concerns and strong willingness to work towards the establishment of stability in Afghanistan and the region. Azerbaijan will continue to be a part of collective efforts in Afghanistan and is capable of contributing significantly in terms of troops, training and financial assistance, as well as its growing transit capacity.

I want to conclude by stressing that Afghanistan is no longer at the crossroads. It has made an irreversible choice to pursue the path of building a secure, self-reliant and self-sustainable State. The Afghan people have long struggled and have made significant sacrifices for that

cause. I want to reaffirm my country's strong support for Afghanistan's sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity, and our resolve to stand by the brotherly Afghan nation in its aspirations.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting. I also wish to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Kubiš for his briefing and Ambassador Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for his statement.

The year 2013, which is coming to an end, is of great significance to Afghanistan. The nomination of candidates for the 2014 presidential election has concluded and preparations for the elections have already entered their final stage. The Afghan National Security Forces are making good progress, with the Forces already starting to assume responsibility for security and stability across the country. All those achievements have laid a good foundation for the country's move into the next transformative stage. China welcomes that development.

However, at this time, Afghanistan is still facing a daunting task in restoring national stability and reconstruction. China supports Afghanistan's ongoing promotion of Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peaceful reconciliation to achieve durable peace, stability and development at an early date. In that regard, I would like to make the following five points.

First, China welcomes the efforts carried out by the different segments of Afghan society in preparation for the 2014 presidential and provincial elections, and it hopes that the Afghan Government will continue to take effective measures to ensure that the elections can be held in a safe and smooth manner. We call on the international community to provide active assistance to Afghanistan with a view to creating the conditions for the elections to be held on time and in a successful manner.

Secondly, China is concerned about the growing number of security incidents that have resulted in civilian deaths, especially those of women and children. We urge the parties concerned to strictly abide by international humanitarian law and international law so as to effectively protect civilians. China supports the Afghan Government in its continued efforts to build the capacity of the military police so as to better carry out its responsibility of maintaining security and safety across the entire country to ensure that the security

transition phase can be successfully completed. The parties concerned should give full consideration to the need to maintain safety and stability in Afghanistan and to transfer the responsibilities of security to Afghanistan in a steady and orderly manner.

Thirdly, China supports the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned reconciliation process and supports the efforts carried out by the Afghan High Peace Council toward reconciliation. It calls on the international community to help the Afghan Government and people assume responsibility in moving the national reconciliation forward and to create an enabling external environment. China welcomes the positive role played by Afghanistan's neighbours and the assistance they provide in that connection.

Fourthly, China encourages the Afghan Government to further promote economic and social development and urges the international community to effectively honour their commitments of assistance as soon as possible and to enhance the efficiency of their assistance. It is important to scale up inputs in areas that have a direct impact on people's livelihood. Priority should be given to providing support and assistance in such areas as agriculture, education and health. It is also important to help Afghanistan to strengthen its own jobs-generating capacity and to achieve durable economic and social development to enhance people's standard of living, thereby eliminating the breeding ground for terrorism, narcotics production and smuggling and transnational organized crime.

Fifthly, regional cooperation on the question of Afghanistan should be further improved and enhanced. Relevant cooperation should respect the legitimate concerns of the countries of the region. It is essential to give an important role to the regional organizations, including the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. China is ready to continue to support and actively participate in regional cooperation on Afghanistan, including hosting the fourth ministerial meeting of the Istanbul Process next year, in order to make continued contributions to maintaining regional peace, stability and development in Afghanistan.

During the past year, the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has been positively received by different sectors of Afghan society and the international community as a whole. China supports UNAMA's continuing to work under its mandate to strengthen communication and cooperation with the Afghan Government and the parties concerned

in order to enable it to play an even bigger role. China is also ready to work to with the international community to explore ways and means for UNAMA to play a better role in 2014 and beyond.

China and Afghanistan are friendly neighbours. China has always been committed to developing bilateral relations and has actively participated in reconstruction in Afghanistan. In a spirit of mutual benefit and common development, and in the light of Afghanistan's real needs, China is ready to continue to provide Afghanistan with support through multilateral and bilateral channels. We are ready to work with the international community to contribute to the early realization of long-term peace, stability and sustainable development.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): We once again welcome Mr. Ján Kubiš, whom we thank for introducing the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/721). We also welcome the statement made by Ambassador Zahir Tanin. I have five brief comments to make.

First, on the electoral process, we welcome the fact that a foundation has been laid for credible presidential and provincial council elections to take place — in other words, elections that could be accepted by everyone. Preparations are well under way with the electoral framework in place, a final list of presidential candidates and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission that has been established. At the same time, we must continue to insist that the process be fair and inclusive. In that regard, it is striking that there are quite a number of women candidates for provincial council seats and that three of the presidential tickets include women as candidates for the vice-presidency. The measures undertaken by the Independent Election Commission have certainly had an impact in driving the registration of women forward. Successful elections are an important step towards the country's future and its sustainability; however, we must also ensure security.

Secondly, as Mr. Kubiš reminds us, it is disheartening that terrorism, in its various forms and spheres, is continuing to spread and even worsening in some regions. The number of terrorist acts and victims thereof has continued to increase, with their attendant tragic toll in death and injury. The measures employed are increasingly grotesque and nobody, not even United Nations officials and humanitarian workers, is safe from the danger of being afflicted by an act of terrorism. As an illustration of that, we deplore the recent terrorist

attacks in Uruzgan and Faryab provinces carried out at the end of November.

I mention that because we cannot leave behind a security vacuum when international forces withdraw at the end of 2014. It is imperative that the withdrawal be offset by strengthening the capacities of Afghan security forces so that they can be duly prepared to meet the challenges and looming threats. That also means dispelling the current uncertainty that prevails in Afghanistan. A specific example is the approval by the consultative *loya jirga* of the bilateral security agreement with the United States. It is now important that the agreement be concluded, so that NATO can also move forward to define its mission proposal, which the Security Council will have to examine.

Thirdly, we are concerned about the lack of progress in the peace process over recent months. We know from our own experience that the process is lengthy and arduous: in the case of Guatemala, it took several decades before a peace was signed. We therefore stress the importance of continuing to move towards the goal of stability and national reconciliation. We support the efforts of the head of the High Peace Council towards a national Afghan process led by Afghans. On the other hand, we are encouraged by the heightened dialogue between Afghanistan and Pakistan on peace and stability underpinned by economic cooperation.

Fourthly, the Tokyo commitments acknowledge the importance of safeguarding and strengthening the progress made in the area of human rights over the past decade so as to ensure the future development of Afghanistan. The protection of the rights of women and children should continue to be a priority. When it comes to civilian casualties, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is providing valuable cooperation through verification activities and by promoting international humanitarian law and respect for human rights, carefully following up on real incidents of civil casualties.

Finally, I should like to refer to the upcoming renewal of UNAMA's mandate. Guatemala will continue to support a solid United Nations presence in order to ensure that Afghanistan, with the support of the international community, can appropriately face 2014 and beyond. In that regard, we believe it is vital for the next Government to be able to rely on stability, continuity and predictability in order to ensure an orderly transition. To that end, it is advisable to extend UNAMA's mandate for a further 12 months — without

any major changes to its mandate and while continuing the same basic activities. Moreover, UNAMA has to be given adequate resources to enable it to fully fulfil its mandate.

Mr. Pankin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Mr. Ján Kubiš for his briefing on the situation in Afghanistan and for presenting the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/721). We also thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for his detailed statement.

We are pleased to note that, in comparison with previous reports, the one under consideration today is more appropriate and objective in its evaluation of trends in the situation in Afghanistan, which continues to be of some concern. However, unfortunately, we would note that, once again, the report does not touch upon the true nature of the threat emanating from the Taliban/Al-Qaida, since neither organization is mentioned, as is also the case with regard to other terrorist armed groups whose aggressive activities in the country led to an increase in the number of Afghan civilian and military deaths. The acuteness of that problem is illustrated by the attacks by the opposition in the spring, including the seizing of a number of areas in the country, including parts of Kabul. Every now and then it seems as though there is a certain element of self-serving reassurance in NATO's decision to withdraw its military presence from Afghanistan. We do not subscribe to such well-meaning approaches, all the more so since during the 2014 presidential elections — whose successful holding we sincerely wish for the friendly Afghan people — fighters intend to demonstrate all their destructive capacity.

We are particularly concerned about the rise in terrorist activities in the three north-eastern Afghan provinces of Badakhshan, Takhar and Kunduz. In October alone they grew by 30 per cent. The number of militants from the Taliban and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan in those provinces rose to 5,000 individuals. Yet just around three to five years ago northern Afghanistan was far more calm and prosperous. We do not conceal the fact that we are extremely concerned at the situation that may arise in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the bordering region of Central Asia after the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

In that regard, we can ask a reasonable question. How appropriate is it to hasten the transfer of responsibility for security in the country from the

international military presence to the Afghan military, and making that all follow an artificially imposed withdrawal timeline? How long will the coalition forces cope with the tasks mandated by the Security Council for stabilization and the preparation of an effective and viable Afghan security and law enforcement force and armed forces? All of those issues require detailed and self-critical reporting from NATO to the Security Council at the end of next year.

For our part, we stand ready to continue interacting with NATO in Afghanistan after 2014, with the understanding that the new alliance mission will have an appropriate international legal base in the format of a Security Council resolution. Without that, the practical agreements existing in Afghanistan today would legally collapse. We feel that after completing the task of stabilization, foreign contingents will no longer need to be present in the country.

We have no doubt that the rise in the influence of fighters both facilitates and has brought about the 50 per cent increase in the production of opiates this year. There is a horrifying statistic — the number of drug addicts in Afghanistan is more than 1 million, which is almost 3 per cent of the Afghan population. Moreover, according to the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, of that total 300,000 are children. The issue, which is a threat to peace and stability not only in Afghanistan but in the region and the whole world, requires collective efforts and the participation of all players. The problem cannot be ignored by saying that the ISAF mandate has no counter-narcotics element. The time has come to look, in an unbiased manner, at the formats for possible cooperation between NATO and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), first and foremost in counter-narcotics and lost opportunities, all the more so given that the CSTO has solid experience in stemming drug flows on the perimeter of the northern border of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Russia fully supports the efforts of the Afghan Government in the progress it is making in the national reconciliation process, including through dialogue between the High Peace Council and representatives of the armed opposition, under the leading role of Kabul, and on the basis of the well-known triad of principles: laying down arms, recognizing the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and decisively cutting ties with Al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations.

At the same time, it is obvious that, as the international contingents withdraw from Afghanistan and with progress in establishing the Afghan National Security Forces, the motivation for the armed opposition to come to an agreement will diminish. The story of the Qatar office, which the Taliban supposedly temporarily closed without even waiting for its requests to be met, is just another demonstration of that. Taking that into account, we believe that demonstrating flexibility with regard to easing the Security Council's sanctions regime with respect to the Taliban is possible only if the Taliban take steps towards compromise.

We share the view on the need to activate and strengthen the role of regional cooperation by assisting with Afghanistan's revival as a peaceful, independent and economically flourishing State. We are convinced that the most optimal platform for synchronizing regional efforts to provide assistance to Afghanistan is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, in which almost every country in the region is represented, including Afghanistan. At the same time, we think it unjustified that sometimes excessive emphasis is placed on the Istanbul Process. Its added value has not yet been proven. Participation in working group meetings is often low, and a number of States have demonstrated slight interest in its proceedings.

Achieving significant results in stabilizing Afghanistan is possible only through our collective efforts. If we want to achieve maximum results with our outside partners, we need to coordinate our efforts. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan has provided invaluable assistance. Its role will only increase with ISAF's withdrawal.

For our part, we shall continue our active efforts for the stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan, both bilaterally and by participating in large-scale regional projects aimed at ensuring the sustainable economic development of the country and of the Central Asia region. We have consistently and respectfully supported the efforts of the Afghan Government in establishing conditions conducive to long-term stabilization in the country and in the region on the basis of the friendly partnership that has traditionally existed between Russia and Afghanistan. That is in line with the national interests of our countries and contributes to a stable and multisectoral development of the whole region.

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to take this opportunity to express my condolences for the

helicopter accident that just led to the loss of lives of six American personnel in Afghanistan.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President, for your expression of condolences.

I would like to welcome Special Representative Kubiš back to the Council and thank him for his briefing. On behalf of my Government, I also extend our appreciation to the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the entire United Nations country team for their efforts, which have been crucial contributions as Afghans have made significant advances for their country. We also welcome Ambassador Tanin and thank him once again for both his valuable comments and valuable engagement.

We can see evidence of the transformational changes in Afghanistan in the United Nations 2013 Human Development Index. Since 2000, Afghanistan's score in the Index has improved by nearly 60 per cent, more than any other country. Without losing sight of the remarkable transformation Afghanistan has made in the past 12 years, today I would like to address the ongoing security, political and economic transition.

On the security side, with the help from the United States military and our many allies, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) have assumed lead responsibility for security country-wide. That milestone also signalled a shift in the International Security Assistance Forces' primary mission from combat to training, advising and assisting the ANSF. In that connection, the outcome of recent deliberations by the loya jirga on the United States-Afghanistan bilateral security agreement shows that the Afghan people overwhelmingly support the partnership that has brought us this far and want very much to sustain it.

Concluding the bilateral security agreement promptly would be an important signal to Afghans that their interests will be protected and that their concerns about the future will be addressed. The United States is committed, in the spirit of the bilateral security agreement, to remain a strong partner in support of the Afghan people's effort to achieve lasting peace, security and development.

Turning to the political transition, my Government is encouraged by the progress Afghans have made in preparing for the April 2014 elections. Two key electoral laws have been enacted. Election and complaints commissioners have been appointed. A

list of candidates has been finalized, and each of the presidential tickets represents a broad-based coalition, which is critical to ensuring that all groups have a stake in both the process and its outcome.

Like the United Nations and other countries that have been supporting Afghanistan's development, the United States strongly supports that democratic process, but I emphasize that we neither endorse nor favour any individual party or candidate. The choice of president and provincial officials rests, as it should, entirely with the Afghan people. The United States will continue to assist the Afghan Government, especially its electoral authorities, as well as the Parliament and civil society, in their efforts to strengthen the electoral system and prevent fraud. It is our profound hope that the April presidential balloting will prove to be a truly unifying moment for the Afghan people — an event that will both consolidate recent gains and provide a sturdy platform in future for improved governance.

Economically, the United States and our international partners have in the past decade made a substantial contribution to Afghanistan's progress. For example, we have built or rehabilitated more than 3,000 kilometres of road, laid fibre-optic cables that connect Afghans to one another and other countries, and made it easier for Afghans to obtain access to basic health and educational services. Looking ahead, we strongly support a vision for regional cooperation called the New Silk Road. Secretary Kerry announced our backing just last week for the CASA-1000 transmission line project, which will allow existing hydroelectric generation capacity in Central Asia to be used in Afghanistan and Pakistan. We appreciate the efforts of the World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank to advance CASA-1000, and hope that other donors will join us in supporting this promising initiative.

More generally, we are convinced that expanding connections to its Central Asian neighbours will greatly enhance Afghanistan's ability to diversify its economy, increase trade and create more and better opportunities for its people. Accordingly, we fully endorse Afghanistan's goal of acceding to the World Trade Organization in 2014.

The progress Afghanistan has made has been built in part on the contributions of development professionals and humanitarian personnel, helping the local population on projects of every description. Their effort can entail severe risks. Already this year, there have been more than 230 incidents of violence

directed at such personnel, imperilling both Afghans and the international staff and volunteers who work in partnership with them. Just three weeks ago, separate attacks Uruzgan and Faryab provinces claimed the lives of nine aid workers. My Government extends its sincere condolences to the families of the victims of all such attacks. We call on all parties in Afghanistan to respect the neutrality and basic human rights of humanitarian and development workers.

Finally, with an eye to continuity, my Government hopes that the Council will approve, in March 2014, a one-year renewal of UNAMA's mandate. The Mission continues to play a vital role in Afghanistan and we see no need to alter the time frame or scope of its core mandate at this time. We must also ensure that UNAMA has adequate resources to carry out its many important priorities, which include the coordination of humanitarian and other assistance, support for regional diplomacy, the political process, human rights monitoring, institution-building and capacity development.

In conclusion, I would like to cite the words of a leader whose legacy has been much on our minds. "In the history of nations", observed Nelson Mandela, "generations have made their mark through their acumen to appreciate critical turning points and, with determination and creativity, to seize the moment". Today, the leaders of Afghanistan and their people and the international community all have choices to make. My Government hopes that we will choose to seize the moment now so that in 2014 we may continue working in partnership — lasting partnership — on behalf of a safer, more prosperous and more united Afghanistan.

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan): We thank Special Representative Ján Kubiš for his comprehensive briefing to the Council today. His dynamic leadership and the effective role of United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) continue to contribute to stabilization in Afghanistan. We also welcome Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, to the Council and deeply appreciate his statement as well as the perspective he has shared with us.

Afghanistan stands at the threshold of a consequential year. The people of Afghanistan will be taking important steps in the coming months to shape their destiny. We wish our Afghan brothers and sisters success as they negotiate difficult political, security and economic transitions.

The political transition requires a smooth electoral process and inclusive, integrative reconciliation. Timely, inclusive, transparent and credible elections will have a salutary impact on efforts for peace and stability. The Afghan Government is making extensive preparations for the elections. Security challenges to the electoral process ought to be addressed in the early stages of planning, as underlined by the Secretary-General.

Simultaneously, an inclusive, Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process must take off and succeed. A political settlement is central to that process. We have called on all stakeholders to seize this opportunity and support the peace efforts. That is imperative to reverse the destructive cycle of conflict. For its part, Pakistan will not choose sides, play favourites or interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, nor should any other State. The people of Afghanistan must have the necessary strategic and political space to make their own decisions.

Pakistan will continue to do all it can to help Afghanistan sustain the reconciliation process. At the request of the Afghan leadership, Pakistan appealed to the Taliban to enter into dialogue with the Afghan Government. We have released Taliban prisoners, including Mullah Abdullah Ghani Baradar, and facilitated his dialogue with the High Peace Council. Our leadership at the highest level remains engaged with that Council, which is making commendable efforts for peace under the leadership of Mr. Salahuddin Rabbani.

We feel that the potential of the Doha process or a similar process must be explored to accelerate the pace of reconciliation and political settlement.

The drawdown of NATO-International Security Assistance Forces in Afghanistan should not lead to a security vacuum. It is vital that arrangements be in place beyond 2014 to bolster stability in Afghanistan and its neighbourhood. The Afghan security forces and institutions are gaining increased capacities and capabilities, as the Secretary-General has noted in his report (S/2013/721). The transformation of a war economy to a peacetime economy will require greater reliance on strong domestic growth and resources. The Secretary-General's report indicates a slowdown in economic growth because of the uncertainty surrounding the political and security transitions. That can be turned around by the active involvement and continued assistance of the international community for Afghanistan's reconstruction and economic

development. That is important not just for economic viability but political stability.

Pakistan, despite its own resource crunch, is contributing to Afghanistan's economic reconstruction. During his recent visit to Kabul, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif announced the enhancement of our assistance for reconstruction and socioeconomic development in Afghanistan, from \$385 million to \$500 million.

The peoples of Pakistan and Afghanistan are bound by strong bonds of geography, history and kinship. Those bonds will never be atrophied or severed. A peaceful, stable, united and prosperous Afghanistan is in Pakistan's interests. During his recent visit to Kabul, Prime Minister Sharif said "your stability is our stability".

In developing its relations with Afghanistan, Pakistan is focused on three interlocking dimensions, namely, the Afghan peace and reconciliation process; a strong, comprehensive bilateral relationship with an emphasis on trade and economic partnership; and regional economic cooperation.

We appreciate the Secretary-General's positive evaluation of the constructive engagement between Pakistan and Afghanistan on economic cooperation, security issues and the peace process. Today Mr. Kubiš mentioned the positive momentum in Pakistan-Afghanistan relations to build trust and foster cooperation. I welcome his remarks.

Prime Minister Sharif is reaching out to the Afghan leadership in pursuit of his vision for a peaceful and prosperous neighbourhood. In their three meetings — in Islamabad, London and Kabul — Prime Minister Sharif and President Hamid Karzai resolved to draft a strategic partnership, address common challenges of extremism and terrorism, and work for economic development that benefits the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as the entire region. Our two countries have agreed to enhance connectivity, including through a motorway between Peshawar and Kabul and rail links between Peshawar and Jalalabad and Chaman and Spin Boldak. We are planning for a hydropower project on the Kunar River. We are also confident that our two countries will be able to enhance bilateral trade to reach up to \$5 billion by 2015.

We have assured Afghanistan of optimum utilization of the Afghanistan-Pakistan transit trade agreement so as to facilitate its access to foreign markets through Pakistani seaports and land routes. People-to-people

contacts have also increased. This year, another 600 Afghan students joined thousands of others who were already pursuing higher education studies in Pakistan.

On the regional plane, we also agreed to accelerate transregional projects, including the Central Asia-South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project, known as CASA-1000, and the gas pipeline involving Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, known as TAPI.

The international community, led by the United Nations and the Afghan Government, should work to create conducive conditions for the early return and sustainable reintegration of over 3 million registered and undocumented Afghan refugees still in Pakistan. Pakistan has renewed their stay and legal status until the end of 2015. Pakistan will not be able to absorb fresh inflows of refugees.

The report of the Secretary-General refers to record levels of poppy cultivation and opium production in Afghanistan. Illicit drugs production and trafficking fuels instability and ruins health and security conditions, involving hundreds of millions of lives, as Mr. Kubiš noted in his briefing today. Pakistan is directly affected by the narcotics trade. We have been taking part in regional efforts in that regard and hope that the Afghan Government will be able to eliminate poppy cultivation with the support of regional and international organizations.

It is incumbent on us to secure the Pakistan-Afghanistan border through constant vigilance, effective management and real-time communication. Militants should not be allowed to trigger rounds of escalating tension by pitting border security forces against each other. More importantly, we should have regular contacts between the armed forces and intelligence agencies of the two countries so as to prevent periodic volatility along the border.

The United Nations role in supporting the Afghan people and Government will be crucial in the post-2014 period. We agree with the Secretary-General that the United Nations should concentrate on good offices, the support of Afghan-led political processes and coherent approaches to equitable and sustainable development.

Let me conclude by quoting Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who, during his recent visit to Kabul, said,

"Pakistan has a vital stake in Afghanistan's success and in its journey to peace and development, and I

reassure you that Pakistan will stand by and support the Afghan people every step of the way”.

Mr. Kandangha-Bariki (Togo) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Ján Kubiš for introducing the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/721) and for his excellent work as Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), despite the extremely harsh conditions. I also thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin for his intervention.

Afghanistan continues to face many challenges, despite enormous efforts that have led to tangible progress. The situation concerning security and human rights and the narcotics issue have not fared any better. The political situation has shown little improvement, in particular, the peace process and dialogue remain deadlocked. Given the situation, we call on all political actors to recommit to that process. We urge the Chairperson of the High Peace Council to continue to take initiatives towards a successful conclusion, and we call on UNAMA to continue efforts to reduce inter-ethnic and intertribal tensions.

Nevertheless, on a positive note, tangible progress continues in Afghanistan's relations with the other countries of the region. The same holds true with regard to implementation of the Kabul process concerning the coordination of development assistance.

The presidential and provincial elections to be held next year remain a focus of attention for Afghan politicians and the entire international community. The technical and institutional preparations under way, the publication of candidate listings, as well as the naming of the Independent Electoral Complaints commissioners and the provision of substantial logistical and financial resources towards the effective fulfilment of their mission, illustrate the Government's commitment to holding the elections on time and in better conditions.

Effective measures are needed to ensure security for voters and election officials alike, during that important phase in Afghanistan's history. Violence clouding the process, namely, the killing of a Kunduz provincial election official, reminds us that the Taliban and other armed factions will make every effort to sabotage the electoral process in order to prevent voters from fulfilling their civic duty.

The violence punctuating the electoral preparations is indicative of an even graver climate of insecurity in the country, such that, in the past three months, security

incidents increased by 74 per cent and armed clashes by 48 per cent.

We deplore the fact that the number of civilian casualties, including women and children, is steadily rising — it is up by 13 per cent compared to last year. We are particularly disturbed by the situation of children, who are subjected to indiscriminate, untold suffering. Faced with that tragedy, the end of which is far from sight, we are determined to express our gratitude to all, particularly the Government's technical working group on children and armed conflict, UNICEF and UNAMA, and their tireless efforts to end violence against women and children.

Factors leading to insecurity will eventually be overcome through strengthened human resources and security institutions as the International Security Assistance Force withdraws. In that regard, we urge the continuing establishment of Afghan local police forces, despite the persistent attacks against them. Unfortunately, those attacks have not spared the United Nations, relevant partners and humanitarian organizations, as well as diplomatic missions. We condemn those unjustifiable, despicable acts, and again request that the authors be identified and prosecuted in accordance with applicable laws.

In that context, we welcome the bilateral security agreement between the Afghan authorities and the United States Government that was recently signed and ratified by the consultative *loya jirga*, and hope that it will help strengthen security throughout the country, thus reducing violence.

The United Nations and international partners are working with the Afghan authorities to create conditions conducive to peace and reconstruction of the country in the conditions of insecurity that we mentioned above. One of the major challenges it needs help in dealing with is drugs. The fact is that the fight against drugs is still a serious headache for Afghanistan, despite the adoption and implementation of a national strategy to combat drugs. Poppy cultivation in the country has reached unprecedented levels, with an increase of 49 per cent. Given the situation, we call on Afghanistan's neighbours and other international partners to support the Government's efforts and provide it with the assistance necessary for dealing effectively with this scourge, which also has negative repercussions for peace and security in the region.

Afghanistan is changing, happily and despite everything, in a favourable regional environment where trade with other States, bilaterally and through regional entities, is getting stronger, particularly in the framework of the Istanbul Process. We encourage all the countries concerned to continue to work with Afghanistan to meet their shared challenges. We hope that the commitments made within the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework and aimed at implementing the Kabul process will continue to be honoured, with UNAMA's help.

Finally, I should commend the unwavering support that the United Nations and its programmes and funds have continued to give Afghanistan. I would like to reiterate my country's gratitude to Mr. Ján Kubiš, who has shown exemplary leadership at the head of UNAMA. Nor should I omit to commend Ambassador Gary Quinlan of Australia and his whole team for the admirable role they have played in taking over the management of this issue from Germany.

While Togo will be leaving the Council in a few days, we remain ready, within the framework of the international community's efforts, to support Afghanistan in its quest to regain definitive peace and national harmony.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš, for his briefing and 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 Zahir Tanin, for his statement.

I associate myself with the statement to be delivered later in this debate by the observer of the European Union.

I would also like to offer my condolences to the United States and the International Security Assistance Force for the helicopter accident that took the lives of six American soldiers.

Now that the presidential and provincial elections scheduled for 5 April 2014 are looming on the horizon, we can better assess the road that Afghanistan has travelled over the past 12 years. What was hardly imaginable in 2001 is taking shape today. If the elections are successful, the country will have established a significant milestone partway along the road that can distance it a little farther from the recent years of war and lead it to peace and stability.

A successful election is one that takes place on schedule and in which candidates campaign freely, peaceably and with mutual respect. It is an election in which the participation of everybody, women included, is assured without exception, in which voters' and candidates' physical safety is guaranteed, and in which voters, especially women voters, can go to the polls without having to deal with moral or psychological pressure. It is also an election whose results are accepted by the largest possible number of people because the balloting and counting are conducted transparently. We welcome the progress made so far with the electoral preparations. We urge that no effort be spared to put a capable security framework in place and emphasize the importance of ensuring the broad inclusion of women at all levels of the electoral process.

The distance travelled since 2001 is also visible at the level of the security transition. The Afghan security forces, which did not exist 12 years ago and which were created with the help of the international community, are now in overall charge of the national territory. Despite the magnitude of the task, they are rising to the occasion. But the challenges remain significant. Anti-Government elements are still operating, and attacks on humanitarian workers and the numbers of civilian victims of the conflict have grown alarmingly. These challenges demand that security capacities be strengthened. It is also crucial to put an immediate end to any uncertainty as to the scope of future international support missions to the Afghan security forces, or we risk losing the fruit of years of work and cooperation.

Concerning human rights, the progress made since 2001 must also be preserved. In that regard, it is important that the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission Human maintains its autonomy from the Government and its credibility vis-à-vis the people. It is also important to act decisively in order to combat the high levels of discrimination and abuse of which Afghan women are still victims. In that regard, we are extremely concerned about the findings of the 8 December joint report from UNAMA and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the implementation of the law on eliminating violence against women. The low rate of indictments under the act compared to the number of complaints filed is inexplicable. Impunity seems to be the rule rather than the exception. It should be recalled that full application of the law eliminating violence against women was one of the major commitments in the Tokyo

Mutual Accountability Framework. The international community should not compromise on this point.

I would also like to reiterate how serious Luxembourg considers the plight of children in armed conflict. We welcome the fact that the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/721) includes information on violations and abuses committed against children. Given the scale on which such abuses and violations continue to occur, we urge that UNAMA maintain sufficient capacity for child protection, in accordance with resolution 2096 (2013).

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our belief that for national reconciliation to succeed in Afghanistan it must be led by the Afghans themselves. At the same time, close cooperation must be established with regional partners in order to address the many challenges that exist not only in the areas of the economy and security, but also in the fight against drug trafficking. UNAMA, meanwhile, will continue to play an important supporting role after 2014 and should be provided with resources sufficient to fulfilling its mission.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2013/721) and Special Representative Ján Kubiš for his briefing. I would also like to thank Ambassador Tanin for his important statement today.

I would first like to join with others in expressing our sadness at today's crash in southern Afghanistan in which six United States soldiers of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) were killed, and to pay tribute to the work of ISAF's service personnel for their tireless efforts to build peace in Afghanistan in the face of danger.

My statement today will focus on five key areas: security, the peace process in the region, elections, the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework and the future engagement of the United Nations in Afghanistan. First, concerning the security landscape, the determination and dedication of ISAF and the Afghan national security forces have allowed the Government of Afghanistan to build the foundations of a stable and democratic country. The Afghan national security forces have proved themselves this fighting season, their first in the lead. But the gains they have made are fragile, and the insurgency remains resilient. The support of NATO and the international community will be vital to ensuring long-term stability

in Afghanistan. We welcome the loya jirga's decision last month to endorse the bilateral security agreement, and we hope it will now be signed without further delay. NATO will be able to plan properly for a long-term, sustainable and balanced relationship only once the bilateral security agreement between the United States and the Government of Afghanistan is in place, as the representative of Australia said before us.

The second key issue is work towards a stable and prosperous region. A political settlement remains the best way to security and sustainable peace in Afghanistan. We welcome the weeks of dialogue between the leaders of Afghanistan and Pakistan, which has delivered tangible results. The United Kingdom is a strong supporter of that vital relationship. Afghanistan's other close neighbours will also be central to that effort. We welcome the support of those countries engaged in the Heart of Asia process and other initiatives to promote trade, economic prosperity and security.

Third is preparations for elections. Afghanistan is entering the final phase of preparations for the presidential and provincial council elections, which are just four months away. Technical preparations are proceeding well. The new legal framework is being implemented. Over a third of those taking part in voter registration so far were women. That is good news. Alongside support to the United Nations Development Programme Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow — the ELECT II programme — in recent months, the United Kingdom has pledged a further \$11 million to build the capacity of women elected to provincial councils next year and to ensure that their voices are heard in the democratic process.

The United Kingdom encourages the Government of Afghanistan to give election observers the access they need to the electoral process so that when the time comes, they can report credibly to the Afghan people on how inclusively the election has been conducted.

The fourth key issue concerns our challenge to deliver on the commitments we made at the Tokyo Conference in 2012. The Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework remains the blueprint for the international community's development efforts in Afghanistan. The priorities of the Government of Afghanistan next year are to maintain economic stability, to deliver credible and transparent elections and to consolidate the gains made in human rights, particularly women's rights, as our colleague from Luxembourg underlined earlier. A Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board meeting,

scheduled for January 2014, will provide an important opportunity for the international community and the Government of Afghanistan to review progress, set post-election priorities and plan for the ministerial development conference later this year. The United Kingdom looks forward to co-chairing that conference.

Finally, on the future of the United Nations in Afghanistan, the United Kingdom is firmly behind a strong United Nations presence in Afghanistan. The United Nations will have a central role next year, working with the Government of Afghanistan to lock in the gains made over the last decade. To deliver that objective, the Council will need to deliver a mandate next March that gives the Special Representative and his team the clear steer on what we see as their priorities for 2014 and beyond and the tools to execute that mandate effectively.

We agree with the priorities identified in the Secretary-General's quarterly report. We also agree that a country-wide presence is essential for the United Nations to carry out its responsibilities. To do that effectively, the United Nations must have the resources it needs as well as the backing of the host Government. We also want to see the United Nations country team step up its activities, particularly on the rule of law.

The year 2014 will be challenging. We pledge to continue our support to the Government of Afghanistan as it seeks to build a more peaceful, democratic and prosperous future for all Afghans. That is in our common interest here today.

Mr. Oyarzábal (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank Special Representative Kubiš for presenting the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/721) and Ambassador Tanin for his important contribution.

I would also like to express heartfelt condolences for the death of the six United States soldiers in southern Afghanistan.

The Secretary-General's report presents a comprehensive overview of the circumstances in which the transition in Afghanistan is taking place, the goals attained and the difficulties still to be confronted. The report acknowledges the importance of the 2014 elections for strengthening the peace, reconstructing Afghanistan and completing the political and security transition.

Therefore, we highlight the progress in the preparations for the elections, the existence of a preliminary list of 10 presidential candidates, and later identifying the corresponding process for the independent electoral institutions. At the same time, we believe that it is important that the elections be carried out in an appropriate security framework that enables the Afghan people to freely exercise their rights. In particular, we encourage Government and the international community to make provision for the presence of women, police officials and security agents so that Afghan women can exercise their right to elect their representatives. The full participation of women in the elections is a major challenge. However, it is also an important demonstration of an inclusive and transparent electoral process.

While we acknowledge the significant progress that has been achieved over the last decade, when it comes to gender equality in Afghanistan and the empowerment of Afghan women, we are aware of the challenges, and we believe it is vital for women to fully participate in the peace and reconciliation processes as well. As on we have said on other occasions, we believe that must also be a strategic priority in the transition. The full participation of women at all levels and sectors of economic activity is vital in building solid economies and consolidating societies that are stable and fair.

With regard to the security situation, we are still seriously concerned about the rise in the number of civilian victims of terrorist attacks. Among them are a high number of women and children killed or injured. We reiterate our urgent appeal to all parties to observe international humanitarian law and for the perpetrators of those acts to be brought to justice.

Under the leadership of its Government, the decisive impetus of its people and the support international community, Afghanistan has travelled a long road and is preparing to begin a new phase of independence and sovereignty in 2014. In that new phase, the United Nations and the international community must continue to accompany the Afghan people and Government in capacity-building as they shoulder their responsibilities to reduce the impact of the transition to the lowest possible extent. We agree with the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the importance of ensuring that the progress achieved on human rights over the last 12 years should not be compromised in the transition process. We highlight in particular the need to protect and strengthen the rights of women and children.

Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea): I would like to thank Special Representative Ján Kubiš for his briefing and to extend our full support for the dedicated work the Special Representative and his team are carrying out. I would also like to thank Ambassador Tanin for his important statement.

My delegation would like to express our deep condolences on the loss of United States troops in a helicopter crash in southern Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has achieved progress in its political, security and economic transition over the past decade. As Afghanistan enters its final year of transition, it is important that the gains made be sustainable and irreversible. In that context, I would like to focus on four key areas where more efforts are required.

First, on political transition, ensuring the success of the presidential and provincial elections in 2014 will be the most critical task in the Afghans' political transition. In that regard, we welcome the ongoing electoral preparations made by the Afghan Government, including the finalization of candidates and the completion of voter registration. Efforts must be enhanced to ensure the security of electoral personnel and voters and better access to encourage women's participation. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) should strengthen its support to that end so as to consolidate the legitimacy and integrity of the process. National reconciliation, owned and led by Afghans, is another important step in moving the political transition forward. We welcome the High Peace Council's recent efforts towards that end and hope that such efforts will yield tangible progress in the near future.

Secondly, on the security situation, while we welcome the ongoing efforts to strengthen the capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces and the Afghan National Police, a 13 per cent rise in civilian casualties shows that serious challenges remain. The recent attacks on humanitarian and development personnel further adds to our concern. We strongly condemn such acts of violence. We reiterate that all parties must take every feasible step to ensure the protection of civilians and comply with their obligations under international law. The ongoing support of the international community to strengthen the Afghan security sector and improve cross-border cooperation is essential to effectively meet such challenges.

Thirdly, on human rights, the protection of human rights, especially those of women and children, is a key commitment made by the Afghan Government under the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. We expect the Afghan Government to build on the improvements made and strive to make further advances, including through the full implementation of the law on the elimination of violence against women.

Lastly, on narcotics, we are concerned at this year's record levels of poppy cultivation and opium production. A comprehensive and coordinated response is needed to address that threat. We urge the international community and regional partners to further support Afghan-led efforts to that end.

In conclusion, I wish to underline that the sustained support of the international community remains vital to Afghanistan's long-term stability. For its part, UNAMA should continue to play an active role in assisting Afghanistan, especially in protecting human rights and strengthening governance.

Mr. Loulichki (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by expressing our condolences to the United States delegation following the tragic helicopter accident. I would also like to extend my condolences to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

I thank Mr. Ján Kubiš for having presented the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/721). Through Mr. Kubiš, I would also like to congratulate the entire staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I also thank Ambassador Tanin for having shared with the Council the efforts being carried out by his country to meet the manifold challenges it is facing.

The report of the Secretary-General takes stock of a real momentum taking place in the preparations of the presidential and provincial elections scheduled for 2014, which are part and parcel of the transformation process that will come with the withdrawal of ISAF from Afghanistan.

That momentum has been supported by the appointment on 15 September 2013 by President Karzai of the Electoral Complaints Commission and the allocation of resources so that the Commission can do its work. The only concern in that respect are the calls by the Taliban and the armed faction of Hezb-e Islami to boycott the elections and the attacks on four voter registration offices that cost the life of a registration

official. We commend UNAMA for its effort to launch local dialogues to mitigate ethnic and intertribal tensions during this decisive moment in the electoral process. We also commend its valuable support for national reconciliation.

The efforts on the part of both the international community and the Afghan Government to ensure that Afghanistan takes the lead in its own security sector are seen in the expanded capacity of the security institutions, the increase in the size of the Afghan army to 185,300 enlisted men and of the air force to 6,800, and, more symbolically, in the launch of the programme to recruit women.

We deplore the continued violence committed by those hostile to the Government, targeting local security institutions and even ISAF premises. Civilians continue to die in the conflict, with a 13 per cent rise in civilian casualties in the first 10 months of 2013 as compared with the same period in 2012.

On a positive note, we welcome the voluntary return of 7,907 refugees, bringing to 36,194 the total number of refugees who preferred to return during the first 10 months of 2013 and to take advantage of aid from United Nations refugees. That is a sign of optimism on the part of the population with regard to the prospects for stability and peace coming to their country. In the same context, we hail the endeavours to carry out the polio vaccination campaign that has helped 8,300,000 children under five years of age.

The regional impact of the security situation in Afghanistan shows how important it is for there to be cooperation amongst the countries of the region with respect to political, security and economic issues. The momentum given to bilateral and regional relations deserves to be pursued, intensified and diversified in the interest of all States in the region.

The challenges that Afghanistan faces are great and many. Political support, economic, security and humanitarian aid remain vital to helping the country consolidate the process of stabilization that would lead to true stability. As we approach the holiday season, we wish to express our hope that 2014 will be a decisive year for peace and security in Afghanistan and for all countries in the region.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now speak in my capacity as the representative of France.

First of all, I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Ján Kubiš, and the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Tanin, for their statements. I align myself with the statement to be made shortly by the observer of the European Union.

I shall address three points: the upcoming presidential election, the human rights situation and drug control.

First of all, with respect to the elections, Afghanistan has entered the final phase of preparations for the spring 2014 presidential elections. The preparations are being carried out in a satisfactory manner. The presidential electoral campaign should start next February. The election will be the foundation for the future legitimacy of the Afghan Government and the sign that democracy has become entrenched in Afghan public life and that reversing course is no longer possible. The success of the elections will hang on security, and everything must be done to ensure that the Afghan forces meet that challenge successfully. There must be comprehensive mobilization against fraud so as not to affect the legitimacy of the winner at the polls.

Beyond the elections, the confidence of Afghan forces in their own ability to operate independently and to engage with strength and determination against the insurgents is critical. The short-term viability of the Afghan State will depend on it.

The human rights and humanitarian situation also remains a concern. The renewed fighting has had a tragic impact on the civilian population. Nearly one civilian casualty in five occurs in the field. We therefore urge the parties to take all necessary measures to minimize the impact of such clashes.

We remain attentive to the rights of women, which have enjoyed unprecedented progress in Afghanistan. These rights should not be diminished because of political uncertainty. Moreover, reporting delays on the part of Afghan authorities on the implementation of the law for the elimination of violence against women are of concern. We urge the Afghan Government to remove all doubts about its continued commitment to human rights following the withdrawal of international forces. We are also concerned about the security of humanitarian workers and the staff of development agencies. The compliance of the parties with the principles of humanitarian law is essential to the continued international engagement in Afghanistan.

With regard to the anti-drug campaign, Afghanistan has seen record opium production in 2013. Drug production has also been diversified. Cannabis cultivation and methamphetamine production centres have emerged. The Afghan population has nearly 1 million drug addicts. The fight against drugs is an imperative not only for security but also for public health.

In that respect, we emphasize the importance of the regional framework in the fight against the production and trafficking of drugs. The Paris Pact framework remains essential to the mobilization of the international community. We support the activities of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries through our annual voluntary contributions to the Paris Pact and to the regional Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries programme. Bilaterally, a treaty of friendship and cooperation between France and Afghanistan provides for enhanced partnership in the fight against drugs, which is recognized as a priority by both countries.

While operational cooperation may be satisfactory, the fight against drugs must be taken better into account at the political level, whether by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) or the Afghan authorities. As the Secretary-General points out in his report (S/2013/721), this is a prerequisite for the stability and development of Afghanistan and its neighbours.

Afghanistan's partners will remain present in the form of bilateral relations based on enhanced military and civil partnership. The modalities of future international missions to support the Afghan security forces are being defined in response to requests by the Afghan authorities. The recommendation handed down by the *loya jirga* on 24 November and the timely signing of the bilateral security agreement with the United States will mark a new step in the consolidation of that partnership. In this context, we believe that the United Nations will be required to assume greater responsibility in Afghanistan. Placed in a more visible, central and complex position, UNAMA will absolutely need to strengthen its political role.

UNAMA will provide its good offices to facilitate the implementation of the Afghan political process. It will also need enhanced competencies in matter of defence and the promotion of human rights. Finally, it will need to assume the role of coordinator of the

funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations in order to promote a development model that meets the challenges of an economy fueled by drug trafficking. To that end, we feel it particularly important to simplify the UNAMA mandate. However, we remain committed to maintaining its presence throughout Afghan territory, which will be essential for a clear and comprehensive view of the situation.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Mukerji (India): At the outset, let me thank you, Sir, for organizing this debate on the situation in Afghanistan. I take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin for his statement. We also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš for his briefing.

Let me begin by expressing our concern over the attacks in Afghanistan's Uruzgan province on 26 November and in Faryab province on 27 November, which resulted in the death of nine development workers. We are pained that these attacks have brought the number of attacks against humanitarian personnel, facilities and assets in Afghanistan to 237 so far this year. All this points to the fact that the main threat to security in Afghanistan is terrorism perpetrated by those who do not want to see a strong, stable and prosperous Afghanistan.

We note that progress has been made in the finalization of the candidates for the presidential and provincial elections due in 2014. This is a significant step during a period of Afghanistan's transition that encompasses security, political and economic dimensions. I would like to reiterate that the key to successful elections in 2014 is a process whose outcome is acceptable to the people of Afghanistan.

The events preceding the presidential elections are extremely important as they will bring to the political discourse issues that are close to the heart of the Afghan people. This will have an impact on the political reconstruction effort in Afghanistan, which must always remain Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled. At this juncture, the support of the international community for the Afghan authorities' electoral preparations is critical. We must also be vigilant to any effort to derail the process, and that would certainly include strengthening the security apparatus.

The security situation in Afghanistan remains under threat from terrorism. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/721) mentions that during the first 10 months of 2013, there were 7,394 civilian casualties, which represents a 13 per cent increase compared to the same period in 2012. Three-quarters of these casualties were attributed to attacks by anti-Government elements. It is also noteworthy that the use of improvised explosive devices, including in complex and suicide attacks, accounted for 49 per cent of these casualties and remains the biggest threat to civilians. There are forces active in derailing the process of reconstruction. Here, I would like to reiterate that India will be undeterred by these cowardly acts of violence. We do not have an exit policy in Afghanistan, and I would like to re-emphasize our commitment to standing by the Afghan people and their servicemen, who have shown exemplary courage in protecting the Afghan people.

The internal security situation has been held hostage to terrorist attacks originating from beyond Afghanistan's border by groups closely allied to Al-Qaida and their affiliates. We would like to reiterate that we must be continuously watchful of the designs of these terrorist organizations. In this regard, concerted action is also needed to isolate and root out the syndicate of terrorism, which includes elements of the Taliban, Al-Qaida, Lashkar e Toiba and other terrorist and extremist groups.

In order to have a smooth transition security plan, it is therefore extremely important that the drawdown of troops and its implications for the security arrangements be carefully assessed and appropriate measures taken to ensure the safety of the Afghan people. I note that the Secretary-General has mentioned the twelfth annual trilateral meeting of Foreign Ministers of Russia, India and China on 10 November, which emphasized the need for continuing international support to and greater regional integration with Afghanistan.

We also note the recent announcement of record levels of poppy cultivation and opium production. The Secretary-General's report rightly mentions that it is a critical hazard to the security, well-being and development of Afghanistan and the wider region. This aspect must not be neglected.

In view to the efforts of the international community to ensure an Afghan-led process of transition, the time has come for the international community to reassess the role it wishes to play.

I would suggest that we need to discuss the issue of mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Afghanistan has achieved a considerable level of political maturity with the ongoing political reconstruction efforts. There is no doubt that UNAMA has played an exceptional role over the past decade in the political, humanitarian and development spheres in Afghanistan, along with other agencies of the United Nations system. However, I would like to mention that in view of the maturity of the process in Afghanistan, the international community may wish to define UNAMA's political mandate in the light of the changed circumstances. The new mandate of UNAMA should help to keep its focus on supporting the political institutions rather than attempting to influence the political process itself, which must be left entirely to Afghanistan's own leaders.

Speaking of UNAMA's role, we also believe that the Mission must step up its humanitarian and developmental role through better delivery of assistance in Afghanistan, since the United Nations is uniquely placed with access to the most remote and isolated communities in the country. We must also not forget that it is not "capacity-substitution" but capacity-building that we are seeking to achieve in Afghanistan. The future role of UNAMA needs to be discussed so that it plays an effective role, keeping in mind the overall objective of the transition process. In doing so we must take into account problems of coherence, the duplication of effort and the resulting higher cost of programmes.

In conclusion, I would like to say that, as we enter a new year, we should be hopeful that Afghanistan will be taking definite strides towards a new era of development and progress. India sincerely believes that the huge efforts of the Afghan people and the international community that have gone into the process of transition will provide a solid basis for a stable future. We would like to assure the Council that India will stand by the people of Afghanistan in all its endeavours. We reiterate our support to the efforts of the international community leading towards a peaceful, prosperous and stable Afghanistan.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Ishikawa (Japan): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš for his participation and for his comprehensive briefing today. I also thank Ambassador Tanin for his statement.

I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the important role of the United Nations, especially that of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in 2014 and beyond, in supporting the Afghan Government's efforts to meet its political and development goals. In that regard, I would like to express my highest respect to all the staff of UNAMA for their deep commitment and dedication to their challenging mission.

We hope that UNAMA will also continue to play an important role in coordinating both the Afghan Government's and the international community's efforts in implementing their commitments under the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. Japan attaches particular importance to reforms in the area of public finance and private banking, as revenue mobilization is a matter of urgency for the Afghan Government to attain sustainability. We request the Afghan Government, including the future Government, to make consistent efforts in the fight against corruption and demonstrate tangible results in the run-up to the next Ministerial Meeting of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, which will be held in January and will be co-hosted by the Afghan Government and the United Kingdom. We expect UNAMA's continued engagement in that process.

The year 2013 was a busy one of critical importance. It paved the way for Afghanistan to achieve important goals in 2014, the final year of its political and security transition. Looking back at the year, the Government and the people of Afghanistan have made significant achievements. To name a few, the Afghan National Security Forces have taken the lead in most operations since June, preparations for the elections have been advancing and intensive dialogue for regional cooperation has taken place. Today, I would like to address some key issues on which Japan believes Afghanistan must make further efforts in order to ensure successful political and security transitions, which will be indispensable for long-term stability in the country.

First, in terms of political transition, it is of the utmost importance that the next presidential and provincial elections give strong legitimacy to the new Government. To that end, elections must take place in compliance with the Afghan Constitution and other legal frameworks, and the current schedule for the holding of the elections, in April 2014, must be observed. A fair and transparent elections process is also imperative.

Furthermore, the election result should be a reflection of the will of the country's entire population.

Japan welcomes the diversity of presidential candidates, as well as the participation of women in both elections as voters and candidates. Yet the security situation continues to be of concern. In order to encourage the full participation of all eligible voters, especially female voters, security challenges must be properly addressed. The Afghan Government is encouraged to take further risk-mitigation measures based on a realistic security assessment.

In order to make a positive impact on the election processes, Japan has donated approximately \$20 million to support the work of the Independent Election Commission through the second Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow project. We are also looking into the possibility of sending an election observer mission.

I would now like to turn to the security transition. Despite the increased competence and confidence of the Afghan National Security Forces, serious security challenges persist. A number of brutal terrorist attacks over the past quarter again caused the tragic loss of innocent lives, including those of aid workers and other civilians. Japan joins in the message sent by the Security Council in its press statement of 4 December (SC11199) condemning acts of violence against development and humanitarian aid workers.

With that security uncertainty, it is a matter of critical importance for the Afghan Government to conclude a bilateral security agreement with the United States at an early stage, as recommended by the consultative *loya jirga* in November. The Government bears the responsibility to ensure that the dividends of the security transition are irreversible. Furthermore, security uncertainty will inevitably impact negatively on our future aid policy. We strongly hope that the Government of Afghanistan will fulfil its duty to provide its people with a sense of security and stability.

Lastly, I would like to emphasize that without progress of the peace process, the dividends of all the transitions will remain uncertain. The process should be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned; responsibility must not be shifted to any other parties. But, as witnessed in the constructive engagement of Pakistan as well as in other third parties' initiatives, the international community stands by Afghanistan ready to lend a hand as it takes steps forward.

I would like to conclude my statement by recalling that the whole transition process and the peace and reconciliation process are supported by mutual trust among all the stakeholders, including the trust between the Afghan Government and the international community.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union.

Mr. Mayr-Harting: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States. The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association country Norway, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

First of all, I would like to join others in expressing our condolences to the United States for the loss of life suffered by its servicemen in today's helicopter crash.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2013/721), and his Special Representative Mr. Ján Kubiš for his briefing and the very hard work he is doing in the face of very difficult challenges. I would also like to thank Ambassador Tanin for his remarks.

We are approaching the start of a very important year for Afghanistan and the Afghan people. In April, Afghans will elect a new President and, by the end of 2014, Afghan security forces will have exclusive responsibility for maintaining and increasing security across the country.

We are very much encouraged by the lively political debate and the progress made in preparing for the presidential and provincial elections, including the important technical roles played by the Independent Election Commission and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission. It will be vital for the elections to be inclusive and transparent and lead to a legitimate outcome. The Afghan authorities must ensure that a comprehensive security plan is in place to enable as many Afghans as possible to have an opportunity to exercise their democratic right. It will also be important that appropriate measures be in place to minimize multiple voting, in particular men

voting on behalf of women, ensure the security of ballot boxes and combat electoral fraud. From our side, we will continue to provide financial and technical support through the United Nations and other bodies to strengthen the electoral process.

A political solution and a genuine peace and reconciliation process are key to lasting stability and development. A genuine peace and reconciliation process should be Afghan-led, inclusive and based on the Constitution.

The security transition has been implemented successfully according to plan. However, we should not underestimate the remaining security challenges. Further strengthening the capacity to address those will be a prerequisite for progress.

In that regard, we would like to emphasize the importance of the bilateral security agreement between the Government of Afghanistan and the United States of America. It will both provide the basis for continuing international support to train and develop the capability of the Afghan National Security Forces and facilitate the continued provision of significant international development assistance to the Afghan people across the country.

The international community's engagement must be matched by continued progress on Afghanistan's agreed commitments under the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. While recognizing that important progress has been made, there are continued concerns about the human rights situation in Afghanistan, in particular the situation of women and girls. The Government of Afghanistan needs to take all possible measures to tackle corruption and improve the business and investment climate, especially to address the concerns regarding the economic situation, as expressed in the current Secretary-General's report.

Looking ahead to the mandate renewal of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in March, we would like to reiterate our full support for the important role played by UNAMA and all United Nations agencies in supporting the Afghan people and in coordinating the international community's assistance to Afghanistan. UNAMA will play a key role as a sounding board for the Afghan authorities and civil society in preparation for the elections. But the role of the United Nations will be even more important after 2014 in ensuring that the international community's assistance continues to reach people on the ground. It is

therefore critical that the United Nations have enough resources to retain a broad countrywide presence and that it support the Afghan Government in ensuring that development efforts gradually lead to self-reliance.

With those brief remarks, we would like to conclude by underlining that the international community should remain strongly committed for the long term to progress in Afghanistan. From our side, we will remain firmly focused on supporting the people of Afghanistan in achieving their aspirations. Our goal remains clear — the emergence of a fully self-reliant, peaceful, democratic and prosperous society for the benefit of all Afghans.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Rishchynski (Canada): I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to address the Security Council. Let me begin by expressing the condolences of the United States of America for the loss of lives in today's helicopter accident in Afghanistan.

(*spoke in French*)

The coming year will be one of milestones for Afghanistan that will involve Afghans taking on an increasing responsibility for the security and development of their country and set the stage for further democratization, stability and peace.

(*spoke in English*)

The April 2014 presidential election will mark the first democratic transition of power from one leader to another in Afghanistan's history. The announcement of the final list of candidates for the presidential and provincial council elections is a first step, and the Independent Election Commission (IEC) and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC) did thorough work in vetting the candidate lists. Canada is committed to supporting efforts to ensure transparency and accountability in the electoral process. That is why we recently announced that we are providing more than \$1.8 million to train election observers, with a specific focus on training women. As elections preparations proceed, we encourage the IEC and the IECC to maintain transparency in their activities to enhance the credibility of the democratic process and ensure that all Afghans have the opportunity to make their voices heard.

The coming year will also see the end of the International Security Assistance Force's mandate and

the transition of the United States and NATO missions in Afghanistan. The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) have taken over the lead and are now consolidating responsibility for security across the entire country. Through that transition, the ANSF must demonstrate that it is becoming ever more capable and professional in confronting security challenges, which originate from both within Afghanistan and within neighbouring countries.

However, the ANSF still requires continued support and training to be able to carry out its operations effectively. Canada has pledged \$330 million between 2015 and 2017 to improve the capacity and sustainability of the ANSF. However, for those funds to be effective, there must be a clear framework for international support in place. We urge President Karzai to sign the bilateral security arrangement with the United States, which was endorsed overwhelmingly by the members of the consultative *loya jirga*, so that planning for a post-2014 NATO support mission can begin.

(*spoke in French*)

The progress being made should not make us lose sight of the challenges still faced by Afghan women and girls. We are deeply troubled by the latest figures from the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, which indicate that it received more than 4,100 reports of violence against women in the first six months of 2013. We must be clear — sacrificing the safety and security of women cannot be viewed as an acceptable compromise for stability. Such numbers show how widespread the problem of violence against women is in Afghanistan and underscore the importance of fully implementing the law on the elimination of violence against women. Canada remains committed to advancing the rights of Afghan women and girls and looks forward with interest to the Afghan Government's report on the implementation of that law — a key commitment under the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework.

(*spoke in English*)

It is crucial that the Government of Afghanistan take concrete steps to implement that law by providing training to police, prosecutors and judges and by strengthening investigative units to ensure that those responsible for carrying out the law have the tools they need to do so. It is also essential that the rights of women and girls be taken into account in all legislation being developed, including the Afghan Penal Code and the

Criminal Procedure Code, and in discussions regarding a peaceful settlement to the current conflict. Without those efforts, the gains that Afghan women have made in the past 12 years are at risk of being stripped away. The future success and stability of Afghanistan will be a result of the integration and leadership of women. Afghanistan's success will come hand in hand with the realization that women are an essential resource necessary for the country's development.

(spoke in French)

The coming months represent a critical time for the democratization and future stability of Afghanistan. We all know that that path is difficult and there are those who are actively working to reverse the progress made to date. That is why it is important that the international community recognize the progress made, while not losing sight of the challenges that remain. Ungoverned spaces remain havens for terrorists, and we condemn the actions of States that sponsor terrorism as an extension of their policy. We also note with concern from the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/721) that poppy cultivation has increased by more than one third over the past year, with production increasing by more than 49 per cent. That illicit activity serves only to strengthen the insurgency and undermine the rule of law.

(spoke in English)

However, the Afghan people have demonstrated that they are resilient in the face of ongoing instability and are determined to build a better future for themselves and their children. In that context, Canada is committed to supporting those that are working to build that better future. That is why we announced in 2012 a commitment of \$227 million in development assistance to Afghanistan for the period between 2015 and 2017. Together with the Afghan people, we will help strengthen the country into one that is more secure, stable and prosperous and never again a haven for terrorists or one that embraces transparency, accountability, human rights and the rule of law.

The President *(spoke in French)*: I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): I would like to thank Special Representative Ján Kubiš for his comprehensive briefing and Ambassador Tanin for his remarks.

We continue to welcome the encouraging signals from Afghanistan in the fields of security,

democratization, good-neighbourly relations and regional cooperation. Yet political, economic, social, security and humanitarian challenges remain, as do perceived uncertainties about the future. Addressing those uncertainties will be crucial for building a sustainable and confident Afghanistan at peace with its neighbours and the world.

Let me emphasize that lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan can be maintained only by the Afghans themselves in a spirit of national unity. Good governance, the rule of law and protecting human rights can meaningfully improve only on that basis. Efforts towards a level of relative economic self-reliance are also crucial. Looking at the current state of affairs, we are glad to see that a conscious strategy that draws its strength from local ownership and seeks to put together various strands of efforts into a meaningful whole is in place.

The April 2014 elections are approaching. The acceptance and legitimacy of those elections will be crucial to ensuring the well-being and sustainability of the Afghan State, based on local ownership. Therefore, keeping the elections fair, inclusive and free from internal and external interference and fraud will be key. The positive momentum in the technical preparations for the 2014 elections is well noted. The three main challenges are security, accessibility and inclusiveness. Robust domestic and international observation will be essential before and during the elections to identify and address those challenges.

Following the elections, international support for democratization and institution-building should continue. The United Nations should continue its assistance in terms of capacity-building and technical support. Addressing grave human rights matters, particularly violence against women and girls, and the issue of civilian casualties should be another priority in the short and long runs. Long-term solutions can be reached only through inclusive, Afghan-owned and led reconciliation. The focus should remain on that issue, with the facilitating role of the United Nations and the help of Afghanistan's regional partners.

As international forces withdraw, regional cooperation grows in importance for sustainability in Afghanistan and beyond. We are glad to observe the increased momentum in the Istanbul Process, and we look forward to its next ministerial meeting in China. We also welcome all trilateral, quadrilateral and multilateral initiatives centred around Afghanistan

and the constructive role played by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. We support efforts to enhance regional connectivity and economic growth, and attach particular importance to the completion and maintenance of local railroad and land routes and the enhancement of civil aviation capabilities.

Afghanistan has come a long way. When in doubt about the future of Afghanistan, we should remember the achievements of the past 12 years, as well as the strength and resilience of the Afghan people as they strive for better tomorrows, no matter what the conditions are. That being said, the continued display of will on the part of the international community will strengthen the hopes of the Afghan people for the future and help ensure a smooth transition.

I would like to stress in particular that ensuring that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has the necessary resources to fulfil its mandate will be key both during and after the transition. 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 conclusion, I would like to voice our strong belief that the United Nations will continue to play a crucial role during and after the transition. I would particularly like to commend the valuable efforts of the United Nations, and UNAMA in particular, and to express our heartfelt gratitude to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Kubiš and his hard-working team.

Mr. Khazae (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this meeting. My thanks also should go to Ambassador Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for his statement. I should also thank Mr. Ján Kubiš, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for his briefing and hard work. We continue to support him and his team in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for the dedicated work that they are doing in Afghanistan.

The role of UNAMA, in our view, is definitely very important and needs more support. UNAMA should continue playing its active role in the post-2014 period. It should expand its cooperation with the neighbouring countries in order to enhance stability in Afghanistan and promote its sustainable socioeconomic development. Basically, the United Nations support

for Afghanistan is crucial, especially in the post-2014 period.

We are glad to hear that significant progress has been made in the political and socioeconomic areas in Afghanistan. It is also promising that the United Nations and the international community of States, in particular in the region, are resolute in their strong long-term commitment to a secure, stable and prosperous Afghanistan. Those are essential, especially on the eve of the year 2014, when two significant events — namely, the presidential election and the withdrawal of foreign forces — will take place in Afghanistan, with their large impact in shaping the country's future. We hope that the active participation of Afghans will ensure the holding of successful elections, which is indeed essential to enhancing the political stability and national unity of Afghanistan and its advancement in all other areas.

Likewise, the peace and national reconciliation efforts of the Government of Afghanistan, leading to an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned reconciliation process, need to be continued. In such a process, Afghanistan's Constitution should be observed and any external pressure or interference or rewarding of the extremist and terrorist groups should be avoided.

In line with those developments, enhancing the security of Afghanistan should continue to be the highest priority, as it is a prerequisite for the success of efforts in all other areas. Accordingly, we believe that the complete withdrawal of foreign forces should be followed by the strong support of the international community in equipping Afghan forces commensurate with the existing security threats, in particular those posed by terrorists, illegal armed groups and organized criminals.

For the Islamic Republic of Iran, as an immediate neighbour of Afghanistan, the security and stability of Afghanistan are a vital element for its neighbours and the region. During all these years, the Islamic Republic of Iran, in cooperation with Afghan Government, has been trying to assist Afghanistan in various areas. We believe that special attention should be paid to combating the interlinked sources of insecurity and instability in Afghanistan, in particular the production of and trade in narcotic drugs as the financial source of terrorist, extremist and illegal armed groups.

In that regard, continued international support for the Triangular Initiative on cooperation on countering narcotics among Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan is

essential not only to strengthening the security and stability of Afghanistan, but also to alleviating the serious concerns of neighbouring States and transit and destination countries of drug trafficking.

Unfortunately, millions of Afghan refugees still continue to live in host countries and an alarming drop in their voluntary repatriation in 2013 underlines the importance of meeting the reasonable needs of repatriated refugees in Afghanistan in order to reverse that trend, and underscores the necessity for rendering more international support to the host countries of Afghan refugees pending their repatriation.

In conclusion, the Islamic Republic of Iran will continue its full support for the promotion of security, stability and comprehensive and sustainable development in Afghanistan. In his recent visit to Tehran, President Karzai held fruitful negotiations with his counterpart, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and with other Iranian officials, and he was assured of the continued cooperation and support of my country.

Mr. Thoms (Germany): I would like to thank Special Representative Ján Kubiš for his briefing today and for his dedicated work in support of the Afghan people. I would also like to thank Ambassador Tanin for his remarks and to express our heartfelt condolences with respect to the tragic loss of life of six NATO soldiers earlier today in Afghanistan.

Despite many challenges, Afghanistan has come a long way in its security, political and economic transition processes. The Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police have proven to be increasingly capable of mastering the enormous task of providing a secure environment. That development has been guided and supported by the framework set up in Bonn, Chicago and Tokyo by the Government of Afghanistan and the international community. It is indispensable that all mutually agreed commitments be fully implemented. As for the ongoing substantial international commitment in Afghanistan, the message of all those conferences and of General Assembly resolution 68/11 on Afghanistan is clear — the international community continues its support.

The year 2014 will be marked by decisive events, such as the presidential elections in April and the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) combat troops at the end the year. As an international community, we need to lay the foundations

for the post-ISAF era. Let me stress that Germany stands ready to remain engaged in Afghanistan with regard to supporting the Afghan security forces as well. The most important precondition for that is the signing of the bilateral security agreement between Afghanistan and the United States. Without that signature, the continued presence of the whole international community, military as well as civilian, will be put into question. The recommendation of the loya jirga to sign the security agreement is an encouraging signal. Consequently, the signature of the agreement should not be put off for too long.

In the ongoing political transition and transformation process, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), with the consent of the Afghan Government, needs to remain the backbone of international engagement and the post-2014 architecture in Afghanistan. That will require focusing UNAMA's work on key areas in which its coordinating and supporting role will remain indispensable.

The first is the continued implementation of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework to ensure coherence and sustainability in Afghanistan's development.

Secondly, while we appreciate the progress Afghanistan has made in preparation for the upcoming elections, UNAMA's good offices will remain necessary to ensure the transparency and inclusivity of political processes in the future.

Thirdly, UNAMA also has a role to play in supporting the Afghan Government's efforts to advance in the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process of peace and reconciliation. UNAMA should also closely accompany Afghan efforts to increase cooperation with neighbouring and regional partners, especially within the framework of the Istanbul Process.

Fourthly, in the light of continuing violations of human rights, including a reported increase of cases of violence against women, UNAMA will need to continue its monitoring and supporting role. We call upon the Afghan Government to prioritize respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without any discrimination. The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission remains the key partner for such efforts. To carry out those challenging tasks, UNAMA will need to be adequately financed and staffed. That also includes UNAMA's necessary presence in the field throughout the country.

I would like to conclude by underlining that Germany will continue to support the Government of Afghanistan through the transition period and beyond. We are confident that the Afghan government will use the remaining months of its tenure to further work on fulfilling the preconditions of a sustained international

engagement in Afghanistan for the benefit of the Afghan people.

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

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.