



UNAMA
United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
Strategic Communication and Spokespersons Unit, Kabul, Afghanistan

Statement to the Security Council

<http://unama.unmissions.org>

Statement to the Security Council (check against delivery)

Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan

New York – 29 September 2011

Mr. President, dear Foreign Minister Rassoul, and dear colleagues,

Thank you first of all Mr. Minister Rassoul for being with us today. It is sending a strong signal to remind us, as you did, that this is the moment when a country like Afghanistan is going through a terrible loss. Your presence here reminds us of the departure of Professor Rabbani and we need to hear from you how Afghanistan once again will be confronting this difficult moment.

We meet in fact today at a sad moment for the people of Afghanistan. The recent killing of former President and Head of the High Peace Council, Professor Rabbani, who was a friend of many of us, highly respected by all of us, was a shock for all of us. But as Afghanistan and the Afghans have shown so many times over thousands of years, the capacity, again and again, to recover from tragic and sad losses, we know and we feel that their resolve and search for peace will not be deterred. And that was said by President Karzai himself recently.

While still it is unclear who was behind this attack, we must, as Professor Rabbani's son said at the funeral in Kabul, continue to work for peace, the same peace that Professor Rabbani had started and to which he had committed himself, sacrificed his life, in his role as High Peace Council, Chairman.

History shows that reconciliation efforts are particularly vulnerable to attack when they start to get traction, and precisely for that reason. During the past years there has been an increased interest from many relevant parties in the idea of a peace process. Under Professor Rabbani's leadership, the High Peace Council has in fact started to generate a form of dialogue that was definitely needed in order to address the trust deficit before talks can become more concrete.

Mr. President, the road to peace is never smooth, we know it. And the death of Professor Rabbani is not the end of the peace process; that was said by many Afghans in particular by the highest authorities in Afghanistan. It is a moment for the Afghans to recalibrate, yes; a moment that calls for national unity among the leaders and people of Afghanistan as they are again resisting another tragic loss.

I myself was recently invited to a showing of an Afghan film. That film was celebrating the achievement of four Afghans, four young Afghans, who, with no previous experience, and with

the support of outsiders, were able to overcome the highest physical obstacle in Afghanistan and become the first team of Afghans to stand on the top of Mount Noshaq – which is the highest mountain in Afghanistan.

Well, that is a reminder to all of us, that the Afghan Government and Afghan people, with the support from others, like all of us here, will eventually be able to work together to find a peaceful solution to their problems.

There is no alternative to a political solution. And there has been a window of opportunity for talks to begin, albeit very narrow and clearly fragile and we need to pursue it.

Peace is a process not an event, a process in which in order to be sustainable and deliver lasting results must be broad-based including Afghans of all kinds, including civil society. The priority must continue to be a dialogue among Afghans themselves led by them, with non Afghans like all of us playing a supportive role, if and when required.

At the national level and as proof of their continued commitment to search for peace, we would be supporting and hoping that, and we know it is going to happen, that the Afghan Government, will be proceeding with a swift appointment of an authoritative voice, not to replace, because Professor Rabbani is not replaceable, but to persist with the efforts he led within the High Peace Council.

Peace efforts are also very much about redressing local grievances. And here I would like pay respect, single out Minister Stanekzai, a friend, to whom we should be, and we are, wishing a swift recovery from his wounds. Efforts done by him to advance the APRP as a critical process at the local level have been crucial and need to continue as a dispute resolution mechanism, in addition to other similar mechanisms. That is why we want to praise and commend the timely convening of a recent conference on APRP in Kandahar. Why, because in fact this is an opportunity to promote reintegration further, particularly in the south where, in all frankness, there has been less progress compared to the northern part of the country. And furthermore, regarding APRP, we should remain vigilant in ensuring a proper and rigorous vetting mechanism. Our recollection of the tragic events in Mazar-i-Sharif, and now with Professor Rabbani, are reminding us how important vetting can be and should be.

On a positive note, regarding the Afghan National Police and Afghan National Army we have noticed the positive progress in development both Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police and they have shown they are capable of enabling themselves of taking on more security responsibility and to become more self-sustaining and that is why in spite of all these incidents transition goes forward. Recent security incidents, while regrettable for the loss of life, have also shown the increased ability of the ANSF –which is the national security system, - to manage such incidents in a controlled and proportionate manner. I will give another personal example if I may: in August, among the many attacks which have taken place, there was an attack in Abdul Haq Square. Well on that occasion, which lasted several hours, a Lt. Colonel called Safiullah, who was the Chief Policeman in the area, embraced the suicide attacker, who was moving towards the people in the square and exploded with him and died; by doing so, saving many lives including his own team. These are the type of example that make us foreigners in Kabul feel it is not rhetoric when we say that the Afghan National Police is growing in the respect of the people and in respect of its own functions.

Human rights: The human cost in the lives of average Afghans is still too high, as President Karzai is constantly reminding us. While some security incidents -and certainly military

incidents- may be fewer in numbers -and there is no question of that as compared to the past- the overall level of civilian casualties unfortunately is still high, too high. And one civilian casualty is one too many. We are increasingly concerned with these rising casualties and the use of certain tactics –particularly by the Taliban, frankly- that produce civilian casualties. There is therefore the need for a surge in protection of civilians. The Afghan state, which has done a lot, is to continue to distinguish itself by putting respect for universal human rights at the centre of their own policies and practices, including in the treatment of prisoners and detainees, where we are seeing encouraging movements in the right direction. And when they take place we should acknowledge that, like the most encouraging improved regulation on women's shelters that can potentially go a long way in protecting Afghan women and girls who often have been suffering the risk of violence and abuse.

Today we are having an important meeting at a very sad and important moment in Afghan history. This is one of the meetings which are preparing for two crucial meetings taking place this year: one is Istanbul and the other one is Bonn. We hope they will be an opportunity for collective determination to support and reassure the Afghan Government and people that we will be with them in the long run. It is our responsibility to ensure that the upcoming conferences, particularly these two, are not ceremonial –and we know they are not going to be ceremonial – but complementary, substantive and forward-looking.

Istanbul, 2nd November, an important rendezvous. That will be, we hope, the opportunity for the region to gather in Istanbul with the intent, and beyond, of setting in motion a means to establish what is being defined as a benign regional order, where Afghanistan and its own neighbours will exchange mutual assurances towards creating a stable and prosperous Heart of Asia. Afghanistan, according to their own feelings –and we share it- should not be the subject but the catalyst for this conference, where the region can discuss concrete –not theoretical- ways on how to develop confidence-building measures to address common challenges. There has been a lot of constructive work done already, particularly on the economic side, but I think Istanbul aspires to address, according to the Afghan desires – who are in charge of this- we want to thank the Turkish authorities for their hospitality and vision in offering this opportunity, to also address political and security issues, not economic ones only. At the upcoming –in two days time- preparatory meeting in Oslo we believe will help and ensure that there is a clear identity among regional players -and beyond- about a possibility of a brainstorming on these ideas so that we do come up with a strong declaration -or something along those lines- which could come up in Istanbul and, possibly, some type of follow-up structural approach, in order to ensure that whatever will be discussed in Istanbul will not just be a statement.

UNAMA encourages and supports those efforts and is part of those but of course recognising the strong leadership of the two co-chairs, particularly Afghanistan and Turkey, and we are supporting very important initiatives such as the New Silk Road, which are in the interests of Afghanistan, its neighbours and the broader region and where we should be investing our attention.

Only trust among Afghanistan and her neighbours and trust among individuals will create an atmosphere in which private investment, as we hope, will become more active and can thrive.

Bonn, on 5th December. We are looking forward to Bonn. It has the potential of having a historical impact although, as always, we should always be cautious in our expectations; but our hopes are very high. It is a crucial opportunity to assess Transition, which is moving and by that time we will have also other meetings in other fora indicating the wish by the Afghan authorities and ISAF on how to substantially, we hope, increase the transition momentum, promote support

beyond 2014, because they need to feel they will not be abandoned once again, and facilitate whatever would be progress, hopefully, in the direction of reconciliation.

There were clouds last time I had the privilege to meet you here. These two clouds, one was the electoral follow-up and the parliamentary crisis and the other one was related to the Kabul bank. I do not want to be perceived as overly optimistic but I think that both clouds are dissipating. On the first one, thanks to a very courageous and wise decision by President Karzai, the Independent Electoral Commission was recognised as the final authority on electoral issues, like in any part of the world where democracy is moving in the right direction. And therefore we have now come to the conclusion of a difficult -but probably useful- journey related to the electoral process and I believe that we will be going in a much smoother direction to the next elections, because recognising that the Independent Electoral Commission is the final authority is a very good starting point for future elections and for the democratic process of separation of powers in Afghanistan. So, good movement in the right direction, nothing is perfect anywhere, not only in Afghanistan; but in the right direction. The cloud, we are feeling, is moving away.

On the Kabul bank we see light, light behind the cloud. There is a possibility of seeing an agreement in principle on an IMF programme and we believe that can be reached through the ongoing negotiations. An IMF technical mission actually is going to arrive in Kabul on 30th, tomorrow, and will stay there for 10 days to finalise discussions. An IMF Board meeting is scheduled for mid-November. That means also that another important element of what we call the ARTF, which basically is a special window of financial support to short term funding for key national priority programmes, is looking much more positive. Additional funds are required but already many countries have been already indicating their continuation of it, while waiting for the cloud to totally disappear. And in that context I think that, with the Minister of Finance, we are likely to be able to co-chair and aim at co-chairing and convening a JCMB, which refers to a common board between the Government of Afghanistan and the international community on economic joint activities- which has been in suspension during this period, and do it in November, which means before Bonn.

On the Review, which, as you know, we take very seriously and we know the Afghan authorities take rightly very seriously, we will continue to work in order to ensure that the Terms of Reference are satisfactory to everyone – and in particular to the Afghan authorities, to work in close cooperation with them and of course in close respect of the Security Council mandate.

On the humanitarian side, although we recognize that there are so many other areas in the world where humanitarian priorities need to draw your attention, we believe that the drought is an issue of concern and that the humanitarian community is going to be required to keep a close eye, together with the Afghan authorities, to avoid that, in addition to insecurity, the price of drought may produce food shortages in the future. That is why we are looking forward to see the outcome of the 2011 CAP Emergency Revision, which is focussing also on the issue of drought.

On the counter-narcotics, I will never stop reminding all of us and each one of us, that what is being done is not enough and that the issue remains serious both for the Afghans and frankly for neighbouring countries and their own people.

Finally, Mr. President, dear Minister Rassoul and dear friends,

The next three months are likely to be very challenging. From a security point of view I am afraid the writing on the wall is clear: we will have to endure, resist and go forward, even if this pattern

of security challenges is likely to be in place. We are also going to have other types of opportunities, such as transition – second tranche – Istanbul and Bonn. When in December I will have the honour to come back here to do my last briefing in my current capacity, I hope I will be able to bring you good news. The Afghans deserve nothing else.

Thank you Mr. President.

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Kabul, Afghanistan
All media contact details are online at: <http://unama.unmissions.org>