

Briefing to the Security Council by Jan Kubis, Special Representative of the Secretary General for Afghanistan, 20 September 2012

Mr. President, esteemed members of the Security Council,

Following the Bonn Conference of 2011, the recent series of successful high-level meetings has redefined and reinvigorated long-term partnership between Afghanistan and the international community.

The NATO Summit in Chicago produced solid commitment to support Afghan security forces well beyond the end of the international combat mission in 2014. The Heart of Asia Ministerial in Kabul put the Istanbul Process' regional cooperation and political consultations on firm ground with prioritised confidence building measures.

Finally, in Tokyo on 8 July, Afghanistan and its international partners concluded a long-term compact based on mutual accountability. Generous donor pledges for social and economic development were matched by Afghan Government commitments notably in the areas of good governance, anti-corruption, human rights and elections.

Continued, predictable support and funding for Afghanistan is dependent on credible progress in meeting the mutually agreed Tokyo benchmarks. Donors in turn have committed not just to funding levels, but on how money is to be spent. It is understood that assistance must reinforce Government systems. This applies also to the UN Family.

We are also committed to reinvigorating the Joint Monitoring and Coordination Board (JCMB) as a more effective forum to ensure mutual accountability in driving and monitoring the Tokyo Framework.

I am encouraged that President Hamid Karzai elevated domestic reforms, notably combating corruption, strengthening governance systems and successful political transition to a central place of his agenda for the coming 2 years.

Mr. President,

As reported by ISAF and the Afghan authorities, both the military campaign and the security transition are on time and on track.

The Secretary General's report shows a decrease in security incidents between May and July as compared to 2011.

Yet many ordinary citizens and Government officials throughout Afghanistan continue to point out to the continuous fragility of the security situation in Afghanistan, to the fear and insecurity that impedes everyday life.

Even where there are not armed clashes, an insidious campaign of intimidation and targeted killings is claiming lives of government officials, women's rights activists, tribal elders and community leaders - including those actively working for peace. Just two of many assassinated in this quarter were the head of the department of women's affairs in Laghman, Hanifa Safi, and Ghazni Provincial Council chairman, Qazi Sahib Shah. Insecurity comes not just at the hands of the Taliban and other AGEs, but predatory armed groups and narcotics rings.

The impact is visible in the curtailed delivery of development programmes and humanitarian aid. Outreach by Government services and personnel are limited in many part of the country.

Internal displacement increases, people move to the relative safety of provincial and regional centers.

Civilian casualties have also decreased overall through the first eight months of the year compared year on year. However this trend began reversing during this summer with a greater number of civilian deaths and injuries occurring in July and August than in the same period last year. In fact August was the second deadliest month for civilians since UNAMA began recording civilian casualties with 374 civilians killed and 581 injured.

Anti-government elements continue to cause the vast majority of civilian casualties, bearing responsibility for over 85% of all civilian deaths and injuries during the summer period.

Even during the Holy month of Ramadan, large-scale and brutal acts of violence included beheadings in Helmand. Already this month, a bomb at a funeral in Nangarhar on 4 September claimed at least 25 lives while another in Kabul city near the ISAF headquarters on 8 September killed children at the hands of a teenage suicide bomber. Such targeted killings of civilians more than doubled over the Ramadan period compared with levels recorded over the holy month last year.

Insurgent leaders have publicly urged respect for civilian lives. The tactics and locations of such incidents however demonstrate a continued reckless disregard for Afghanistan's citizenry. Bombs in crowded bazaars, mosques, wedding and funeral ceremonies have no military objective. Only last Tuesday a female suicide bomber killed 12 civilians including 8 South Africans, reportedly in revenge for an anti-Islamic film made in the USA.

On the other side, aerial attacks continue to be the main cause of civilian casualties by pro-government forces. Most recently five women and two girls died in an air operation on 15 September in Laghman province. ISAF acknowledged the responsibility for the incident, stating that deaths were accidental and launched an investigation.

At the same time, military forces supporting Government have been making some strides in reducing the levels of civilians killed and wounded as a result of their operations. International military forces have reduced the number of civilians killed or injured in aerial attacks by 62 per cent this year compared to the same period last year.

Recently I visited Kunar – a province bordering Pakistan. There I learned about concerns of the civilians caused by cross-border shelling. Humanitarian agencies have registered more than 700 families, that is approximately 4,000 individuals, displaced from Kunar border districts to the neighbouring province of Nagarhar since April. I was also glad to hear that authorities in Afghanistan and Pakistan are already engaged in multi-level dialogue in order to resolve this situation and its root causes.

Mr. President,

Reports of uprisings against the Taliban in various areas of the country are a new development requiring greater analysis. Amidst three decades of conflict the drivers of violence are complex and the actors – and their allegiances – fluid. Desire for local communities to have security and justice led them to taking the situation into their own hands. There is a risk of even greater fragmentation of the security environment.

Many of these localized conflicts would appear to be resistance to the Taliban but not necessarily in support of a greater Government presence. The government should eventually be the solution notably by ensuring improved sub-national governance and the rule of law to enhance people's experience of the state structures and government's ability to deliver services.

The continued growth of local defence initiatives must be accompanied by increasingly efficient systems of vetting, clear lines of command and control linked to state structures, and the rule of law. Local communities, civil society, and women's associations increasingly request to be a part of the vetting and oversight mechanism. In case these forces are implicated in criminal activities, the authorities must act immediately and resolutely bring perpetrators to justice.

The success of another transition -that of detention facilities depends, in large part, to the extent to which any future administrative detention regime respects core human rights protection for detainees, particularly fair trial standards and the prevention of torture. I call on the new leadership in the National Directorate of Security and the Ministry of Interior to implement the reforms necessary to prevent torture and inhumane treatment in all of their facilities.

Mr. President,

The recent spate of insider attacks - Afghans in uniform killing and injuring international and national counterparts - has been widely reported. Up until now ISAF forces lost 51 soldiers, in comparison with 36 during the whole last year. I have been impressed by the serious efforts and measures taken by Afghan authorities and the international military in tackling this issue. I note the strong

continued commitment shown by ISAF contributing nations to the strategy and timelines agreed at Lisbon and Chicago.

I offer my condolences to the families of all the servicemen and women—international and Afghan - who have laid down their lives for the better future of Afghanistan and its people.

Mr. President,

Security transition is important. The ultimate key to future stable Afghanistan is however successful Afghan-led and Afghan-owned political transition.

The 2014 Presidential elections are in the centre of attention. The conduct of credible polls with a mandate for the new country's leadership is essential to national unity and legitimacy and - as highlighted at Tokyo— a critical component of on-going international support.

President Karzai has repeatedly and publicly underlined his commitment to elections under the Constitutional timeline, meaning the Presidential polls in 2014. He has also emphasised that he will abide by a Constitutional bar on more than two terms as head of state.

The Tokyo Framework set forth a number of indicators, underscored by the 27 July Presidential decree, on preparatory steps ahead of elections which are gathering momentum. Such a lead time is unprecedented in Afghanistan. If used constructively this could greatly enhance the integrity and credibility of polls.

I continuously encourage wide consultations and robust public debate over the future election process, including improved legal framework for both the elections, independent electoral institutions and for the media coverage of the elections. It is such inclusiveness that will help ensure the transparency, integrity and acceptability of elections and its results. At the same time this is a time-bound process and crucial decisions by the IEC on voter registration that would take lessons from the past problems and mistakes and that would ensure that all eligible voters will have a chance to vote are required soon, as is demonstrable support from the government and donors. The United Nations will support decisions taken

by Afghan authorities that contribute to the sustainability, integrity and inclusiveness of the electoral process.

Strong and credible leadership of and by the Independent Election Commission is another vital aspect of electoral preparations. In appointing senior electoral officials a wide-ranging consultative process on potential candidates who engender respect and acceptability across the political spectrum is essential. Also crucial is clear agreement -with wide buy in – on the final dispute resolution mechanism.

Mr. President,

Broader reconciliation remains one of the mission's top priorities. We at UNAMA, and the wider UN family, stand ready to support an Afghan-led process as requested. We continue to assist the High Peace Council in its work and seek dialogue and engagement with all relevant interlocutors. Women continue to demand an equal share in the process of peace and reconciliation including representation in the leadership of HPC.

Fostering an environment conducive to building national accord on peaceful and stable Afghanistan is among our priorities. As part of this we plan to support a Track II inter-Afghan dialogue to help engage civil society and broad political forces in discussing the future of the country.

Given the increasing urgency to see progress in peace and reconciliation I would considered it useful to reflect upon possible revisions of the travel ban procedure, while fully respecting the relevant SC resolutions and the sanctions regime under Security Council resolution 1988. Such revisions could further facilitate the safe passage and travel of those anti-government forces that *bona fide* wish to participate in contacts, discussions and talks for the purpose of reconciliation.

Mr President,

The Istanbul Process – led by Afghans, owned by the region and supported by the international community - aims to help bring greater coherence to many valuable efforts in support of regional cooperation. I welcome continued momentum of the

Istanbul Process and the gradual start of the activities of the relevant CBM working groups. At the heart of this initiative lies the realisation that support for a political, security and economic stability in Afghanistan is the direct self-interest of its neighbours and the region.

In this reporting period I had work visits to Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Kyrgyzstan and was in Astana just days ago for the Ministerial Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA). I have been heartened to hear of the long-term commitment to Afghanistan

I also welcome the emerging interest of regional organizations, notably by the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) to engage with Afghanistan and UNAMA in a structured dialogue for the benefit of Afghanistan and the region.

Mr. President,

There has, rightly, been a focus on ensuring the longer-term plans and commitments are in place to build Afghanistan's political, security and development self-sufficiency. However, there are immediate needs too.

More than one-third of Afghanistan's population remains below the poverty line. One in two under-fives is malnourished and over half all children are stunted. As well as individual tragedy this holds severe implications for the country's future human capital.

Natural disasters – including flooding earlier in the year – have immediate impact but also undermine future resilience in a country beset by chronic humanitarian needs and decades of conflict. On a positive note, the heavy snowfall that so severely impacted the most vulnerable at the beginning of the year has yielded the second largest harvest in 35 years: 6.3 million metric ton that is a 42 per cent increase compared to 2011.

The UN consolidated appeal for 2012 was assessed at \$437 million for humanitarian preparedness and response. I am disappointed that in the first eight months of the year only 37 per cent of this has been forthcoming.

Mr. President,

The 2012 poppy eradication figures have been finalized showing 9,672 hectares destroyed in 18 provinces – a 154 per cent increase on 2011. This Governor-led effort has been supported by the Ministries of Counter Narcotics, Interior and Defence.

Genuine mainstreaming of a comprehensive and multifaceted counter-narcotics agenda, as agreed with the cross-cutting Counter-Narcotics Monitoring Mechanism, is now required in tackling this increasingly dangerous scourge which impacts far beyond the borders of Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

At UNAMA, together with the wider UN family, we are working to sharpen and focus activities in a challenging and ever-shifting security and political environment.

A Criticality Review is currently underway – the first undertaken by a special political mission. Good Offices, regional cooperation and support for elections, peace and reconciliation; an impartial voice and advocacy on human rights including the rights of women and children; and helping drive development coherence and humanitarian aid are at the very core of what UNAMA does and I assume will do after 2014, respecting sovereignty of Afghanistan.

Despite the closure of nine field offices, UNAMA still emphasizes national outreach and will continue to provide support throughout the country. I myself visited seven provincial capitals in this quarter. In two of these, Uruzgan and Ghor, while UNAMA will no longer maintain a permanent physical presence, we managed to hand over our field offices to other UN agencies (UNOPS).

UNAMA's increased focus on core activities amidst transition is taking place in the conditions of steep budget reduction for 2013.

Fewer resources necessarily mean that UNAMA can deliver less – I will not pretend otherwise. In making strategic choices however we will focus on support for Afghan authorities in the priority areas of our mandate in a way that ensures maximum impact.

Mr. President,

I have been honest about the challenges, which are many.

I emphasize again, however, that I am encouraged by the firm mutual commitments made between Afghanistan and the international community. Together we now have the demanding task of translating promises into practice.

We remain clearly focused on the ultimate objective –stability and increased prosperity for the people of Afghanistan.

Thank you for your attention.