



As Prepared

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5 September 2015

Thank you, Mr. President. On behalf of UNAMA and as co-chair of this Senior Officials Meeting, welcome. Today, nine months after the London Conference on Afghanistan, the Government and its partners have an opportunity to assess progress in these first few months of the Transformation Decade. We will also reaffirm our commitments to an increasingly self-reliant Afghanistan, where individual Afghans lead lives with access to health care and jobs, under conditions of security, and of personal freedom.

At the London Conference, the international community welcomed the new Government's reform vision, which it outlined thoughtfully and comprehensively in the conference paper *Realizing Self-Reliance: Commitments to Reforms and Renewed Partnership*. Over the last nine months, the Government has worked to develop that vision into specific actions, concrete commitments and forward plans that will deliver results for the Afghan people.

The Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework developed for this meeting synthesizes key elements of those plans. It fulfills the London Conference commitment to refresh the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, agreed in 2012. The TMAF has served donors and the Government in defining key aid priorities and tracking their progress. The refreshed framework will serve the same purpose in the months and years ahead. It will help to ensure continued progress on essential matters of elections, governance, justice and human rights, transparency, fiscal sustainability, growth and aid effectiveness, along with other critical priorities.

As we begin today's discussions, it is important to recall that the framework, and indeed this meeting, are not ends in and of themselves. Ensuring sustainable, equitable growth that improves Afghan lives requires regular, open dialogue at all levels. This effort is a long-term endeavor. Today's conversations will continue over the year leading up to the next development Ministerial conference planned for 2016, and beyond.

Today's meeting is a vital part of the bridge between past commitments, and future pledges renewing those commitments to demonstrate not only Afghanistan's needs for on-going support but to inspire confidence in those that have promised to walk with Afghanistan as it takes on its difficult challenges. As such, it is directly related to meeting ordinary Afghans aspirations. I say this to counter any misconception that this is merely more hot air at yet another international conference.

To be effective, our dialogue must be inclusive. I deeply appreciate the President and Chief Executive's efforts to engage the whole of Government in articulating development and reform plans. I look forward to hearing from the Ministers, the Governors, the representatives of the

Independent Human Rights and Special Electoral Reform Commissions, and the other officials who are present. Your insights are critical to ensuring that our joint work addresses both Afghanistan's needs and its opportunities. On behalf of all the participants, I also welcome the representatives of civil society and the private sector representatives here today. Your voices are an essential reminder of our fundamental purpose. Assistance to Afghanistan is effective only when it serves and benefits all Afghans. In a self-reliant Afghanistan, the private sector and civil society will be drivers of growth and progress. You are central actors in this effort.

Our dialogue must also be candid. This meeting takes place in a context of considerable political, economic and security challenges. Donors face increasing demands for aid funds in conflict zones around the world. The Government, meanwhile, is navigating difficult economic and fiscal terrain. Economic growth is low. Revenue performance is improving, but remains below budget targets. These difficulties are exacerbated by the large illicit economy, real insecurity and destructive violence. I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the courage and resilience of the Afghan security forces in the face of sustained pressure. UNAMA remains, however, deeply concerned about the impact of conflict on ordinary Afghans, whose vulnerability is made more profound by poverty and by isolation from essential services.

I observe that our dialogue must also be constructive. Just as we frankly acknowledge and work to address challenges, we should also recognize the important successes that have begun in the last months.

The Government has made significant progress appointing competent officials to lead Government institutions in the capital and in provinces. The Special Electoral Reform Commission's recommendations, when implemented, can help to ensure full democratic participation in all matters of governance. Other reforms have begun to improve Government revenue collections. The National Procurement Commission is exercising civilian oversight over procurements, saving the Government money and reducing opportunities for corruption. Important steps have been taken to improve the investment climate over time. Laws and regulations to strengthen oversight of key sectors, to clarify Government structures, and to protect and preserve the human rights of all citizens, including women and children, are in process. And the Government will work to prepare new National Priority Programmes that streamline development planning. That effort will assist both Government and donor partners in our shared endeavour of improving social and economic outcomes for all Afghans.

The international community's continuing support to Afghanistan is likewise significant. Afghanistan has benefitted from exceptional levels of development assistance, even as demands on aid budgets have multiplied. Aid planning has become more coherent and more predictable. Aid delivery is increasingly on-budget and increasingly aligned with Government development priorities. In significant measure, these achievements are a product of the commitment to collaborative work that all partners made in first mutual accountability framework in Tokyo.

I would particularly like to thank the Government and international partners for the fruitful discussions during the Tripartite Review into the role, structure and activities of United Nations entities in Afghanistan completed this week. The resulting recommendations will help both UNAMA and the UN Country Team ensure that our work best aligns with the Government's priorities, and with the needs of the Afghan people. For UN partners, this process has very clearly reaffirmed the value of joint dialogue.

It's true that a great deal of complex and challenging work is ahead. But it is also clear that Government, Afghan stakeholders, and international partners are laying important foundations for Afghanistan's success. Today we demonstrate that international engagement with Afghanistan

continues. Even more importantly, we demonstrate that Afghan leadership of the country's development agenda is strong, and getting stronger. The Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework charts our way forward. The framework will guide our preparations for the development ministerial conference planned for the end of 2016. The framework sets a course towards the shared vision of a strong Afghanistan that does not depend on donors for its growth. But we acknowledge that we are at the early stages of a longer journey. And the framework equally signals donors' commitment to significant, continuing support as Afghanistan promotes needed reforms into the Transformation Decade. Together, continuing support and progressive reforms will build the confidence and predictability that are necessary for growth.

We have a mutual responsibility to ensure that Afghanistan preserves and builds on the gains of the last years to benefit all Afghans, including the neediest citizens. Inclusive, candid, and constructive dialogue is at the heart of mutual accountability. I encourage all of the participants to keep these principals at the forefront of our discussions today.

I look forward to hearing from my co-chair and the friends and partners gathered here today. I now invite my co-chair, Minister Hakimi, to address us on Government's progress since London, the need for economic reform and the refreshed mutual accountability framework.
