

UN Security Council
10 July 2008

Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan
Kai Eide

Mr. President I am grateful for this opportunity to address the Security Council. Let me start by expressing my gratitude for the firm support so many of you around this table have given to me and the Mission during the past three months. It has given me and UNAMA great encouragement and valuable political strength.

This is not a regular Security Council report and it is therefore limited in its scope. But it is an important report, concentrated on the outcome of the Paris Conference and the guidance this conference has provided, as requested by the Security Council in its resolution 1806.

Our work over the next 18 months will be guided by three components: the political calendar, the commitments undertaken in Paris and the evolving situation on the ground.

First the political calendar, and by that I refer in particular to the election process that lies ahead of us. Today in Kabul, the Independent Electoral Commission announced its decision on how to move forward. This decision will allow us to proceed with a voter registration process. It has been our view that this process must be conducted in a way that allows all Afghans equally to take part in the elections, while taking into account the difficulties we encounter with regard to security. The decision by the IEC provides a sound basis for the international community to give the financial support required. UNAMA stand ready to provide support to Afghan authorities throughout the election process, as requested by president Karzai.

The second component guiding our work is the commitments undertaken in Paris on 12 June. The Paris Conference was a success. It was a success as a pledging conference, by raising more than 20 billion US dollars in support of our joint efforts in Afghanistan. And it was a success in political terms, by creating the basis for a strengthened partnership between us. The Government of Afghanistan presented its ANDS, which will be our common roadmap under Afghan leadership for the next five years. And the international community pledged to align its resources behind this strategy.

The launching of the ANDS comes at a critical juncture. We need a clearer sense of direction and we need to inject greater energy in our work. I am not at all inclined to trivialize the achievements of the past seven years: they are substantive, far-reaching and in many cases still under-acknowledged. But what I experience every day is questions relating precisely to the kind of commitments we undertook in the Paris Declaration; do we have plan which can unite us all in our work? Does the international community spend its resources well enough? Is the Afghan Government sufficiently committed to addressing corruption and malpractices? I am convinced that if we do not live up to the commitments undertaken in Paris, then we will jeopardize the support that we depend on – both in Afghan public opinion and in the public opinion of donor countries.

The Paris Conference has created a new momentum. We will now all have to look at our development plans to make sure that we do respect the priorities of the ANDS. If we do not align our resources behind this document, then it will be unimplementable. We must

demonstrate an ability to adapt to changing circumstances. This is not the time to navigate by autopilot. The UN's challenge will be to provide assistance to the Government in its efforts to implement its strategy, and to ensure that the donor community responds adequately.

An important part of the ANDS implementation will be to ensure that we respect its priorities. There are two important pillars, which will be decisive for the success of all our other efforts. First of all we need to undertake a massive institution-building effort. More solid, competent and accountable institutions are a precondition for security as well as development, and for enhancing the trust of the Afghan people towards their own government.

The second such pillar is the expansion of key sectors of the economy. There is an urgent need to increase agricultural production and invest in large scale energy projects. In spite of the fact that almost 80 per cent of the Afghans depend directly on agriculture for their livelihood, only a very modest part of our common efforts have been invested in this sector. It has been neglected and cannot be neglected any longer. It is from the agriculture and energy sectors that real and sustainable growth in the economy can come.

The Paris Declaration also includes a strong commitment to deliver aid more effectively. In Paris, donor countries demonstrated that there is now a greater readiness to ensure that more resources are spent inside Afghanistan, that more is channelled through Afghan budgets and that more attention is devoted to promoting Afghan procurement and capacity- building. That is an important development. It is also important to emphasize that the benefits of development must reach all provinces equitably. We cannot allow a situation where poor provinces, poppy-free, secure and with better leadership, are neglected in our development efforts. They must see that there is fairness in development and we must inoculate them against future instability.

Such improvements in the delivery of international assistance must be matched by determination on the Afghan side to improve the quality of its administration, show greater accountability and combat corruption. I am encouraged by the fact that president Karzai is now holding regular meetings with his closest ministers to formulate his government's response to its Paris commitments, including commitments relating to corruption and accountability.

Security Council resolution 1806 gives UNAMA the challenging task of improving the coordination of our common efforts.

The most daunting part of this challenge will be to coordinate development activities. It is important to me that the Paris Declaration so clearly stated that coordination must include all development assistance, which means whether it is delivered through development agencies, NGOs or Provincial Reconstruction Teams. There can be no exception to coordination of development assistance.

Together with our Afghan partners, we are now setting up the structures required to improve our joint coordination efforts.

Mr. President, the third component guiding us is the evolving situation on the ground. There can be no doubt that we have underestimated the humanitarian challenges in Afghanistan and John Holmes will address this in greater detail. As late as in January this year, a joint food appeal was launched by the Afghan Government and the WFP. Today, yet another joint appeal has been launched in Kabul to meet an emerging food security crisis. These constant humanitarian challenges have revealed a clear lack of capacity to address the needs of the most vulnerable people. NGOs have criticized us for this and they are right in doing so. We must urgently strengthen our capacity to forecast, assess, coordinate and respond to humanitarian crises. And we should be imaginative in order to mobilize such resources quickly.

The situation on the ground is further complicated by an increasingly difficult security environment. We did expect an increase in insurgency activities over the past months. What we have seen is an unprecedented level of insurgent and terrorist activities, especially in the volatile provinces in the south and east. But we have also seen a greater insurgency presence in other districts and provinces in the central parts of the country. The attack three days ago outside the Indian Embassy in Kabul demonstrated the ability of terrorists to carry out extremely deadly operations in the heart of the capital.

The situation on the ground confirms that there will be a need for a strong presence of international forces for the foreseeable future. And there is a need for better cooperation and understanding between the military and civilian components of our work. We will, from UNAMA, engage in further discussions with ISAF in order to enhance civil-military cooperation. We will do so – and we will expand UNAMA's presence in the country – in a way that ensures the integrity of, and understanding for, our independent mandate and in a way which can strengthen respect for humanitarian principles.

One particularly sensitive topic is the question of the protection of civilians, which is a core element in UNAMA's human rights and humanitarian agenda. The rising number of civilian casualties is a matter of grave concern to us. First and foremost, every effort must be made to reduce the number of civilian casualties to a minimum. I am in a regular dialogue with COMISAF concerning this and other topics. And we are in agreement that we must develop ways to avoid confusion over the facts when civilian casualties are reported. However, when we talk about civilian casualties we should be clear; the insurgents have continued to display a total disregard for civilian lives, as was most tragically demonstrated by the targeted attack on the Indian Embassy in Kabul three days ago.

I have also repeatedly stated that the solution to the conflict in Afghanistan will not be a purely military solution. It will fundamentally have to be a political solution. There is a need for a broadly based Afghan political dialogue that could reinforce national unity, add momentum to the nation-building exercise and promote prospects for peace. This dialogue will have to be defined by the Afghans themselves, be conducted in respect for the Constitution as well as for the relevant Security Council resolutions. But the political dimension of achieving stability now needs greater prominence.

Finally, there is a need to strengthen regional cooperation and dialogue on some of the critical issues facing the region, such as drugs, refugees and security. There is also great potential in other sectors, such as cooperation on energy, infrastructure and trade. This positive agenda must be exploited. UNAMA stands ready to be engaged whenever the countries of the region see a constructive role for us. I have discussed these issues with both the Foreign Minister of Pakistan and of Afghanistan earlier today. During these discussions I have also underlined the need to pursue the cross-border jirga process and a political dialogue, which seeks to find solutions to common challenges.

Mr. President, as concluded in the Secretary-General's report, the tasks facing UNAMA are very significant. I agree with his conclusion that these tasks can be addressed within the mandate specified in resolution 1806 and that there is no need for amendments or additions. What we do need is resources; more and qualified personnel and financial resources to carry out our work on the ground. We are now slowly reducing the number of vacancies, which is encouraging. But we will need to go significantly beyond the current personnel ceiling if we are to meet the challenges of the Paris meeting. We are at a critical juncture in Afghanistan. UNAMA will only be able to play its role if significant additional resources are provided quickly.

Thank you, Mr. President.