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SECURITY COUNCIL PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT STRESSES IMPORTANCE OF TRANSPARENCY,

CREDIBILITY, INCLUSIVENESS IN UPCOMING AFGHANISTAN ELECTIONS

Welcoming the Afghan-led preparations for upcoming presidential and provincial council elections, the Security Council stressed this morning that it was important that they be free, fair, transparent, credible, secure and inclusive.

In a statement (document S/PRST/2009/21) read out by Ruhakana Rugunda (Uganda), its President for July, the Council reaffirmed the primary responsibility of the Government of Afghanistan and the Independent Electoral Commission to set the necessary conditions for elections, with the active support of the international community.

It called on the people of Afghanistan to exercise their vote in the “historic opportunity for all Afghans to make their voices heard”, and on all parties concerned to adhere to the fundamental principles set forth in the electoral law and all other relevant regulations, in the Presidential Decree on non-interference in election affairs and in the guidelines issued by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan.

The Council also stressed the importance of a secure environment for conducting the elections, recognizing the Government’s ongoing efforts and encouraging greater efforts with the help of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to ensure such security. It condemned those who resorted to violence to obstruct the electoral process.

Noting the expectations expressed during the recent conference in The Hague with respect to expanding the presence of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the Council also expressed support for the Secretary-General’s intention to do so this year, and invited him to provide more details on his proposals.

Further, the Council welcomed the intention of international partners, including the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), to send electoral observer missions and support teams at the request of the Afghan Government.

Welcoming progress in implementing the Afghan Compact and the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, the Council encouraged the Government to enhance its efforts to address issues relating to security, governance, the rule of law, human rights, economic and social development and counter-narcotics. It called on the international community to continue to support those efforts, including through humanitarian assistance.

The meeting began at 11:45 a.m. and ended at 12 noon.

Presidential Statement

The full text of presidential statement S/PRST/2009/21 reads as follows:

“The Security Council welcomes the Afghan-led preparation for the upcoming presidential and provincial council elections and stresses the importance that the elections be free, fair, transparent, credible, secure and inclusive. The Security Council also calls upon the people of Afghanistan to exercise their vote in this historic opportunity for all Afghans to make their voices heard. The Security Council calls on all parties concerned to adhere to the fundamental principles laid out in the electoral law and all other relevant regulations, the Presidential Decree on non-interference in election affairs, and the guidelines issued by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to ensure a credible electoral process. It reaffirms the primary responsibility of the Afghan Government and the Independent Electoral Commission to set the necessary conditions for elections, with the active support of the international community. The Security Council welcomes the intention of international partners, including the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), to send electoral observation missions and support teams at the request of the Afghan Government. The Security Council stresses the importance of a secure environment for conducting elections, condemns those who resort to violence to obstruct the electoral process and, while recognizing the ongoing efforts of the Afghan Government, encourages its additional efforts with the assistance of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to ensure security during the electoral period.

“The Security Council welcomes the strengthened commitment that the international community has shown recently in various fora, including those in Moscow, The Hague, Ankara, Strasbourg/Kehl, Washington, Islamabad, Tehran, Yekaterinburg and Trieste, to help the Afghan Government build a stable and prosperous Afghanistan well-integrated in its region.

“The Security Council emphasizes the central role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in leading and coordinating the international civilian efforts in Afghanistan and notes the expectation expressed in the Hague Conference for expansion of UNAMA’s presence. In this regard, the Security Council expresses its support for the Secretary-General’s intention to further strengthen UNAMA this year and invites the Secretary-General to provide further details of his proposals.

“The Security Council welcomes the progress achieved by the Afghan Government on implementing the Afghan Compact and the Afghanistan National Development Strategy during the period covered by the latest report of the Secretary-General, encourages the Afghan Government to undertake enhanced efforts in addressing issues in the areas of security, governance, the rule of law and human rights, including gender equality and economic and social development, as well as the cross-cutting issue of counter-narcotics, and calls upon the international community to continue to support the Afghan Government’s efforts, including provision of humanitarian assistance, in this regard. The Security Council recalls the priorities identified at the Paris Conference and reaffirmed at the Hague Conference, and emphasizes the importance of providing sufficient support needed for progress in these priority areas.

“The Security Council takes note of the status of the work of developing benchmarks for measuring and tracking progress in the implementation of UNAMA’s mandate and priorities and expresses its hope that the work will be completed through consultation with all actors concerned and that finalized benchmarks will be included in the next report of the Secretary-General.”

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