



**FULFILLING AFGHAN FUTURES:
CIVIL SOCIETY PRIORITIES POST-2014**
The Ayenda Conference, London,



March 2015



The Organisers

The Ayenda Conference was organised and hosted by the British & Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG), in collaboration with the Civil Society Joint Working Group (CS-JWG), the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief & Development (ACBAR), the Civil Society Support Group (CSSG), the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and Counterpart International. It was financially supported by the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID, through Counterpart International) and the European Commission (EC). This report was written and edited by Lindsay Alexander.

About BAAG (www.baag.org.uk)

The British and Irish Afghanistan Agencies Group (BAAG) was established in 1987. It is a unique advocacy network organisation with 28 current members. BAAG's vision is to contribute to an environment where Afghans can take control of their own development and bring about a just and peaceful society. We seek to put our vision into practice by:

- Bringing member agencies and the wider relief and development community together to advocate for continued international commitment to the development of Afghanistan;
- Sharing information and knowledge to improve policy debate and decision-making processes with a particular emphasis on ensuring that those processes reflect the views, needs and aspirations of the Afghan people; and
- Enhancing the abilities of Afghan civil society in influencing national and international policies on Afghanistan.

BAAG hosted the Afghan civil society side event during the 'Afghanistan: The London Conference' in 2010.

About the report writer

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FOREWORD

The London Conference on Afghanistan (LCA) was the first gathering of the new Afghan Government with its key international partners to address development issues in Afghanistan. It happened at a time of changing military and civilian partnerships that signified an end to the 'transition' and initiated the start of Afghanistan's 'transformation decade'.

Bringing together 74 representatives from 59 countries plus inter-governmental agencies, the conference was a significant opportunity for renewed commitments, affirmations and partnerships. It was, therefore, all the more necessary at the LCA that Afghan civil society had their voices meaningfully heard. To this end, BAAG and its partners worked to organise the Ayenda Conference and other peripheral meetings to provide Afghan civil society a platform to inform decision-making about Afghanistan's future peace and prosperity.

As with other successful events, the input of Afghan civil society required multiple levels of coordination, consultation and organisation. I would like to acknowledge and congratulate the Afghan civil society representatives and all the networks, organisations and individuals inside and outside of Afghanistan who helped us create such a success, without which this report would not exist.

My thanks go to (in alphabetical order) to the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR) and its members, Counterpart International, the Civil Society Joint Working Group (CS-JWG) and its constituent networks, the European Network of NGOs in Afghanistan (ENNA) and its members, Gender Action on Peace and Security UK (GAPS) and its members, the Department for International Development (DFID) and its staff, as well as the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I would like to acknowledge all of these organisations' key staff members' efforts and apologise for being unable to name them and their specific contributions individually due to space limitations.

Our joint efforts would not have been possible without the generous financial support of the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the European Commission (EC).

My special thanks go to BAAG's staff, volunteers, consultants and member organisations for their tireless efforts and endless commitment to Afghanistan.

Jawed Nader, *Director of BAAG*

ACRONYMS

ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development
AIHRC	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
APPG	All Party Parliamentary Group
ARTF	Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund
AWN	Afghanistan Women's Network
BAAG	British and Irish Afghanistan Agencies Group
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CS-JWG	Civil Society Joint Working Group
CSSG	Civil Society Support Group
DFID	Department for International Development
EC	European Commission
ENNA	European Network of NGOs in Afghanistan
EU	European Union
EVAW	Elimination of Violence Against Women
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
GAPS	Gender Action on Peace and Security
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IS	Islamic State (group)
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
LCA	London Conference on Afghanistan
MP	Member of Parliament
NAPWA	National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPP	National Priority Programme
SOM	Senior Officials Meeting
TMAF	Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

'Afghans are looking at the new Unity Government with great hope. The momentum for change and reform has been created, but this will now require strong political will and fearless action.'

(Afghan civil society spokesperson, Barry Salaam)

'It is now time for a more sincerely committed government to act in partnership with civil society.'

(Afghan civil society spokesperson, Freshta Karimi)

'As ambassadors of change, unity and integrity young people represent a new national unity.'

(Afghan civil society panellist on youth, Azaryuon Matin)

'Afghan women are strong and can help lead an Afghanistan where everyone will enjoy their lives with full respect.'

(Afghan civil society panellist on women, Frozan Mashal)

'Afghanistan has the potential to become economically self-sufficient. But we need international investment and guidance to unleash our potential.'

(Afghan civil society spokesperson, Barry Salaam)

Afghanistan is at a key point in its history. This year, for the first time, Afghanistan peacefully transferred power to an elected government. After 13 years, foreign allied troops withdrew from Afghan soil and, despite continued international support, a reduction in foreign aid income has been clearly sign-posted. Within this context, a new charter is being drawn up between the Afghan Government, its people and the international community. In the London Conference on Afghanistan and Ayenda Conference (the civil society associated event) in December 2014, these strategic partners in Afghanistan's future took an important step in building confidence in each other and mapping out a path for the future.

On December 3rd 2014, over 250 attendees including 53 Afghan civil society delegates came together for the largest ever, international conference with Afghan civil society of its kind. Hosted by the British & Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG), the purpose of the 'Ayenda' Conference (meaning future in Dari) was to give Afghan civil society a platform to take up their 'rightful place' in discussions about their country's transformation. The aim of the conference was to ensure that Afghan civil society is facilitated and supported from an international platform to better engage with the new Afghan government and its international partners on key development priorities and deliverables.

Attended by delegates from across civil society, academia and governments from Afghanistan, the UK, Europe, Japan and the US, the Ayenda Conference included contributions from civil society spokespersons, as well as, among others, Afghanistan's Chief Executive Officer (His Excellency Dr Abdullah Abdullah), the UK's Secretary of State for Development (Right Honourable Justine Greening MP), and the US Ambassador at Large for Global Women's Issues (Catherine Russell). The

Ayenda Conference fed into the ministerial-level London Conference on December 4th 2014 and informed the outcome of the London Conference Communiqué (see Annex 6).



Delegates at the Civil Society Workshop, 2nd December

Afghanistan Today: Gains, Challenges & Future Trends

The following section provides a synopsis of key gains and challenges facing Afghanistan from an Afghan civil society perspective. This includes notable trends identified by the Ayenda delegates to consider in future policy and programming.

Hard Won Gains

The Afghan civil society delegates were keen to congratulate the Afghan leadership on a peaceful transition to a newly elected government and on an ambitious reform agenda. As 'ambassadors of change, unity and integrity' many delegates felt that the increased participation of young people in politics today is just one positive representation of democracy and national unity in Afghanistan.

The delegates also recognised the huge advances that have been made in Afghanistan over the past decade in some aspects of basic service delivery. This includes life expectancy increasing from 42 to 62 years in 12 years¹, a significant reduction in maternal deaths and the number of children in school rising from 1 to over 8.6 million². The Afghan civil society delegates believed that signs of economic growth have included rising incomes, a growing private sector, improved aspects of the legal, regulatory framework and broader macro-economic growth.

All delegates recognised that civil society itself has also been transformed over the past decade as it has carved out a space in service delivery, human rights protection, advocacy and communications across the country. Furthermore, the rights of women have been raised up the political agenda with around thirty per cent of parliamentarians in Afghanistan being women.

However, despite these advances, huge challenges remain that risk reversing these hard won gains:

Entrenched Corruption

Corrupt, inept and centralised institutions, weak rule of law and an absence of a broad-based, political culture were believed to be key weaknesses in the governance system among the civil society delegates. Alongside rising insecurity, these governance challenges were perceived to be the greatest areas of risk for Afghanistan's future.

Weak Rule of Law

The weak judicial sector was repeatedly cited among the civil society delegates as a key, neglected challenge for Afghanistan. This includes the need to address poor access to justice for women under the informal, customary justice system.

Uneven and Unsustainable Service Delivery

With the reduction in aid flows, concerns were widely expressed among the delegates about the

future sustainability of basic services and the loss of hard-won gains in key service sectors. Other key concerns among civil society included how services are prioritised and for whom, and how Government will be made accountable to the Afghan people for delivering quality basic services.

Entrenched Illegal Economy

The drain of the illicit economy on the formal economy, matched by weak rule of law, was widely believed to be the most critical economic issue to address. Concerns remain that the reliance on the opium economy and other illicit activities will only increase as aid declines.

Mass Unemployment

The need for jobs is urgent. Unemployment and underemployment in Afghanistan is estimated at 8 and 48 per cent respectively (World Bank, 2014³). These trends, delegates argued, are likely to rise with the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the reduction in aid flows and rising violence.

Censored and Unrecognised Civil Society

The civil society delegates felt that the media continue to be let down by government who fail to protect them against violence and intimidation. The push by the Ministry for Culture for a state-run media arm is also of concern to civil society as is the risk of possible new restrictions to their operations under the new Government. Against this background, civil society in Afghanistan strives for greater independence.

The civil society delegates also recognised the key challenges for civil society itself in Afghanistan. These include questions of how representative civil society is, issues of 'form over substance', and duplication and poor coordination of work. This is reinforced, it was argued, by a lack of formal recognition of civil society's role by the state, and no clear strategy for civil society inclusion in governance, service delivery and other processes.

Growing Youth Bulge

The inter-generational divide was also identified as an increasing risk in Afghanistan with 78 per cent of the population under 35 years old. Huge youth un/under-employment and the resultant poverty put some youth at risk of radicalisation by the growing number of radical groups⁴. While a Youth Policy exists, the civil society delegates felt that

1 USAID Engagement in Afghanistan 2014 and Beyond, USAID 2014.

2 Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Afghanistan, UN Human Rights Council, April 2014.

3 Transition in Afghanistan: Looking Beyond 2014, The World Bank, November 2011.

4 A senior Afghan army general has confirmed that 'elements under ISIL flag' are trying to recruit fighters in the country, resulting in reported daily clashes between IS and Taliban militants in many provinces in the south (Al Jazeera, 18 January 2015).



Jawed Nader delivers the Key Note speech.

little has been done to implement it in practice and the benefits remain the preserve mainly of urban, male youth.

Persistent Violence and Discrimination Against Women

Afghanistan remains one of the most dangerous places for women, and gender power relations remain largely unchanged within many households. Given the potential future deterioration in security and livelihoods in Afghanistan, the civil society delegates expressed their concern about rising violence and discrimination against women if the Government steps back from implementing its commitments to women’s rights.

Afghanistan’s Transformation Decade:

Key Civil Society Priorities

The following section provides a synopsis of key priorities for Afghanistan post-2014 from an Afghan civil society perspective. This includes a summary of the recommendations identified by the Ayenda delegates to consider in future policy and programming and in the preparation for the Senior Officials Meeting in mid-2015.

A Commitment to Good Governance

The conference delegates felt there was indeed real cause for optimism for the Transformation Decade in Afghanistan. They gave their full backing to the National Unity Government’s ‘ambitious reform agenda’ and to the peace process, ‘as long as it does not compromise the democratic process’. It was also stated that the Government’s ‘Self-Reliance’

position paper written for the conference is, ‘better than we could have hoped for’ (Afghan civil society spokesperson, Barry Salaam).

Building Accountable Governance in Practice

Turning these commitments into practice requires action. The civil society delegates therefore called upon the Government to finalise and fully implement its anti-corruption strategy, through open consultation. This should include basic outcomes such as politicians being appointed and held to account on the basis of meritocracy and performance. Electoral commissions, amongst other executive agencies, should be reformed to ensure independence, and parallel government institutions streamlined to minimise duplication, inefficiency and corruption. The principle of ‘open contracting’ should be taken on in service delivery procurement and clear and open principles for negotiation of mining contracts agreed and monitored. Civil society should also be set up as a partner to monitor and provide oversight of government policies and programmes through the establishment of a national accountability programme.

Prioritising Rule of Law

The civil society delegates at the Ayenda Conference called upon the Government to be seen to hold abusers of human rights to account. This includes discouraging political interference in law enforcement by prosecuting all those in government who have protected abusers. The justice system also needs to be reformed to better address the needs of women. This includes addressing the role of the informal justice sector and the national police force to ensure women have full and equal access to the law in practice.

Building a Transition Plan for National Self-Sufficiency

Building on the huge advances in basic service delivery in Afghanistan to date, the Afghan delegates agreed that transitioning to self-sufficiency was critical. As such, the need for an open, budgeted financial plan and capacity development plan to effectively manage this transition was recognised as a priority. The delegates were keen that civil society plays its role in this, drawing on their sector and region-specific knowledge and their expertise as service providers. It was believed that civil society could also play an important role in coordination between the (often competing) private, non-state and state providers to maximise the targeted delivery and coherence of services across Afghanistan.

Decentralisation for Fair and Accountable Service Delivery

More even development and more accessible and accountable service delivery will also be achieved if authority over planning and budgets is moved beyond major urban centres and provincial capitals, the delegates argued. Governors, provincial and district officials could then work in partnership with their local civil society for more effective and accountable governance at the sub-national level.

Building an Enabling Environment for Growth

Without confidence in a stable business and investment environment, growth will not be achieved. Civil society delegates therefore called for more robust legal and institutional frameworks to transform Afghanistan's substantial physical and human resource potential to economic growth. This requires political will and collaboration with the international community and regional actors to enforce the rule of law and control the illicit national and regional economies. Regulatory reforms are also necessary, both to counter corruption and to create a more business-friendly environment. This includes regulation for the effective management and oversight of the mining and energy sectors to provide a secure environment that promotes a more equal spread of economic benefits.

Investment in Key Resources

Job creation is vital. Many delegates highlighted the huge economic opportunities in Afghanistan, including the potential for equitable and transparent resource development, greater regional integration and development of its vast human resources (male and female). They therefore called for greater investment in transport, digital and energy infrastructure and access to finance. Technical and vocational training to better prepare the population for working outside Afghanistan and to strengthen the competitiveness of Afghan manufacturing and agriculture was also believed to be critical. Finally, ensuring equal access to these resources

for women and men was deemed essential for a productive economy.

A Civil Society-State Strategic Partnership

The civil society delegates at the Ayenda Conference were keen to address the imbalance of power between the state and civil society that has presided to date. In the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, an advocacy role for civil society oversight was recognised. At the London Conference on Afghanistan, it was widely agreed that with the presence of a stronger, more mature civil society, including strong women's organisations, the opportunity to develop a new, more nuanced partnership between Afghan citizens and their state is real.

Within this context, many delegates felt that formal recognition of civil society organisations by the Government was important. Basic protection from violence and discrimination for journalists and civil activists was also felt to be a basic foundation of democracy. There was recognition that civil society itself needs to establish its own internal regulatory systems to ensure accountability. A more formalised strategy for engagement between the Government and civil society platforms was also recommended.

Youth as Agents of Change

The civil society delegates agreed that youth have played an important role in Afghanistan's transition to democracy and represent a huge human driver for economic growth but are also vulnerable to radicalisation by extremists. As such, it was agreed that youth are an important cohort of the population that require support.

The civil society delegates argued that practical recommendations to address youth-specific needs and rights are needed to inform the implementation of the Youth Inclusion Policy and other sectoral policies. Budgets should also be allocated to ensure this happens in practice. This includes, for example, more targeted programmes to help improve vocational and professional youth skills to better prepare Afghan youth for employment opportunities outside the country, or programmes to counter radicalisation of the Islamic education sector so that it supports religious, cultural and democratic values among youth.

Women as Equal Participants in Peace, Security and Development

In order to build on the significant work to date, the delegates called for political leadership and ring-fenced budgets to ensure the practical implementation of existing laws to protect women's economic, social and political rights in Afghanistan. This includes ensuring more balanced



Minister Qarizada speaks in Mechanisms of the Future panel discussion, Ayenda Conference

gender participation in planning, budgeting and monitoring processes at all levels. In particular, greater participation is essential in the security forces and judiciary where there is a visible absence of senior-level women. Prosecution offices and shelters for the survivors of violence should also be extended across all regions of Afghanistan.

The delegates called for more support to integrate women into the productive sectors both outside Afghanistan and outside the traditional female economic sectors. This includes improving the effectiveness and quality of literacy courses for women and strengthening the focus on retention of girls in school by supporting community schools, increasing security around schools, training more female teachers and raising awareness about the harm of early marriage.

The Afghan delegates also argued that when addressing women's rights, the starting point should be how gender relations are understood in Afghanistan. That is with respect for Islamic law and traditions and an understanding of the contradictions of gender relations embedded in Afghan society today.

(For more specific recommendations see the full conference report)

Outcomes and Next Steps

Outcomes

At the Ayenda Conference, the government representatives from Afghanistan, the UK and US were in general agreement with the priorities presented by the Afghan civil society delegates for Afghanistan post-2014. This included consensus around the priorities to tackle corruption, provide basic rule of law, build a self-sufficient national economy and promote good governance that includes youth, women and civil society as active and equal partners.

There was also broad agreement on the need for a more strategic and meaningful partnership between the state and civil society to take this forward, with support from the international community. In the final session, Dr Abdullah Abdullah (CEO for Afghanistan) highlighted the important role of civil society in determining the future course of Afghanistan. 'As agents of change in society you are a partner in the National Unity Government, I can assure you of that', he said. This sentiment was also reflected in the London Conference Communiqué,

which welcomed the Afghan Government's commitment to 'constructive, on-going dialogue with civil society'.

The civil society representatives were also keen to acknowledge the 'excellent' report from the Afghan Government ('Realizing Self-Reliance: Commitments to Reforms and Renewed Partnership', December 2014). This represents a solid framework for dialogue to build consensus between all actors on the practical means and specific outcomes for reform and growth in Afghanistan.

Afghan Deputy Minister of Finance (Policy), Shafiq Qarizada captured the sentiment from the conference well when he candidly pressed for meaningful follow-up from the Ayenda and London Conferences. 'We do not have a systematic way of engaging with civil society', he said, 'a system needs to be established....Before Tokyo, we had a lot of discussion but there was no follow-up.... this should not happen again'.

Next Steps

The next step will be to build on the relationships, ideas and commitments generated in the Ayenda and London Conferences to develop practical plans for the implementation of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF), the National Priority Programme (NPP) and other policy commitments. In the spirit of partnership, the Afghan civil society delegates of the Ayenda Conference support the following follow-up actions before the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) in mid-2015, as listed in the box below:

Afghan Government-Civil Society Cooperation: Recommended Action for 2015

Broadly, the Afghan Government and civil society should:

1. Develop a cooperation strategy for joined-up engagement on policy reform, planning/needs assessment, service delivery, monitoring and evaluation, both in national and sub-national levels. This should include setting up civil society as an oversight partner of government policies and programmes through participation in relevant structures, such as the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board.
2. Work to strengthen civil society's own independence and accountability. This should include civil society building their own strategies for winning public trust, for aid effectiveness/appropriate use of funds and effective engagement with government.

Specifically, in preparation for the Senior Officials' Meeting in Kabul, mid-2015, the Afghan Government and civil society, with international support should:

1. Agree on the aims, agenda and process for the Senior Officials Meeting. This planning should include consideration of the priorities and recommendations outlined in this paper, in line with the Government 'Self-Sufficiency' Paper, National Priority Programmes and other such policies;
2. Establish Advisory Committees made up of key civil society, business and government experts to support the TMAF refresh and other SOM processes from a particular theme or sectoral perspective. These committees would have responsibility for gathering evidence, providing advice, coordinating inputs to the process and reporting on the outcomes;
3. Review implementation of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework including analysis of the causes for certain successes and failures in its delivery. This review should include indicators for gender equality and state-civil society cooperation.



INTRODUCTION

Audience at the Ayenda Conference, 3rd December

'Over the last decade, a new generation of women and men has emerged. They are highly educated and dedicated. They are in the media, in the private sector, in civil society, and in government. They are the force for change, and with your support over the next decade, they will be empowered to lead Afghanistan towards a brighter future – a future we can all be proud of.'

(Afghan civil society spokesperson, Barry Salaam, Final Session)

'We the people of Afghanistan have never felt so in charge of our destiny. We will not just survive the transformation decade. We will thrive. Our future belongs to us and our Ayenda just started.'

(Keynote speaker, Jawed Nader, Director of BAAG)

'I don't need to tell you how pregnant with opportunity this moment is. With the draw down of ISAF and the new Government of National Unity, the good will of the international community has gone up. This is a key opportunity to press the reset button.'

(Conference Chair, Michael Keating, Chatham House).

On December 3rd 2014, over 250 attendees including 53 Afghan civil society delegates came together for the largest ever, international conference with Afghan civil society of its kind. Hosted by the British & Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG), the purpose of the 'Ayenda' Conference (meaning future in Dari) was to give Afghan civil society a platform to take up their 'rightful place' in discussions about their country's transformation. The aim of the conference was to ensure that Afghan civil society is facilitated and supported from an international platform to better engage with the new Afghan Government and its international partners on key development priorities.

Attended by delegates from across civil society, academia and governments from Afghanistan, the UK, Europe, Japan and the US, the Ayenda Conference included two panel and plenary sessions made up of national and international delegates. This was followed by Afghan civil society statements delivered by the elected civil society spokespersons (Freshta Karimi and Barry Salaam), and responses from Afghanistan's Chief Executive

Officer (His Excellency Dr Abdullah Abdullah) and the UK's Secretary of State for International Development (Right Honourable Justine Greening MP). Afghan civil society statements from the Ayenda Conference were then presented at the London Conference on Afghanistan the following day and informed the final Conference Communiqué¹.

The purpose of this paper is to summarise the key Afghan-focused perspectives and priorities for Afghanistan post-2014 from those who attended the Ayenda Conference on 3rd December 2014. The aim is that this will help:

1. Outline ideas for follow-up to the London Conference and the future role of civil society in Afghanistan;
2. Disseminate Afghan-focused development and humanitarian expertise to an international audience of practitioners, policy makers and donors;

1 See the Annexes for the conference methodology, agenda, participants' list, civil society speeches and final communiqué from the London Conference on Afghanistan.



3. Inform future national and international policy related to Afghanistan;
4. Inform future civil society programming and initiatives.

Report structure:

Section 1 of the paper will provide an overview of the current context in Afghanistan and highlight notable trends identified by the Ayenda delegates to consider in future policy and programming. Section 2 will provide a synopsis of key achievements and challenges facing Afghanistan from an Afghan civil society perspective under six different themes: governance, service delivery, economic development, civil society, women and youth. Under each theme, there are recommendations from Afghan civil society as well the responses from the Afghan Government and international community panellists. Section 3 outlines some potential next steps for follow-up to the Ayenda and London Conferences, particularly in the lead up to the Senior Officials Meeting in Kabul in mid-2015.

Additional Information Sources:

A number of position papers were drafted by civil society in the run up to the London conference to help frame and inform the discussions. This report does not attempt to repeat what is written in these papers, only reflect the key issues and priorities that were raised during the Ayenda Conference on 3rd December and a preliminary meeting on 2nd December 2014. In conjunction with this report, these papers provide a more detailed, complementary information source on civil society perspectives and priorities for Afghanistan post-2014.

Key sources:

- Synthesis of Afghan and International Civil Society Papers for The London Conference on Afghanistan, Elizabeth Winter and Anna Nijsters, BAAG and ENNA, December 2014.
- The Afghan Civil Society Position Paper: London Conference on Afghanistan, Civil Society Joint Working Group, December 2014.
- Support to Afghan Civil Society in the Decade of Transformation, signed by 22 Afghan civil society organisations, December 2014.
- Position Paper on the Occasion of the London Conference on Afghanistan, Afghan Women's Network, December 2014.
- Transforming Development Beyond Transition in Afghanistan: Position Papers for the 2014 London Conference: Aid Effectiveness, Governance, Service Delivery and Women's Rights, The Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR), December 2014.
- Realising Self-Reliance: Commitments to Reform and Renewed Partnership, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, London Conference on Afghanistan, December 2014.

These and other Afghan civil society positions papers can be found at www.BAAG.org.uk/resources

1. AFGHANISTAN TODAY & FUTURE TRENDS

Afghanistan is at a key point in its history. This year, for the first time, Afghanistan peacefully transferred power to a National Unity Government. After 13 years, foreign allied troops withdrew from Afghan soil and despite continued international support, a reduction in foreign aid income has been clearly sign-posted. Within this context, a new charter is being drawn up between the Afghan Government, its people and the international community. In the Ayenda and London Conferences, these strategic partners in Afghanistan's future took an important step in building confidence and mapping out a new type of relationship for the future.

This next section presents a brief overview of the current context and upcoming trends to watch in Afghanistan as identified by the delegates at the Ayenda Conference.

1.1 Political context

This year has been a critical one for Afghanistan with the country's first ever, peaceful transfer of power and the establishment of a new, consensus-based government. Despite the elections widely being perceived as 'flawed', the delegates felt the National Unity Government has made a 'good start' and should take advantage of the feel-good factor of a nation 'united through democracy'.

However, corrupt, inept and centralised institutions, weak rule of law and an absence of a broad-based political culture (and political party opponents) were believed to be key weaknesses in the governance system. Alongside rising insecurity, these challenges were perceived to be the greatest areas of risk for Afghanistan's future. Nevertheless it was widely agreed that the presence of a stronger, more mature civil society and a democratically elected government today offers the opportunity to develop a new partnership between Afghan citizens and their state.

1.2 Security & Justice Context

With the withdrawal of foreign troops, the fear of increased insecurity in Afghanistan is real. The recent attack on a cabinet minister, a spate of suicide attacks and the emergence of Islamic State (IS) in Afghanistan alongside local radical groups were cited as examples of the rising threat of violence¹. This has particular implications for women and girls whereby the main barrier to accessing services and

1 A senior Afghan army general has confirmed that "elements under ISIL flag" are trying to recruit fighters in the country, resulting in reported daily clashes between IS and Taliban militants in many provinces in the south (Al Jazeera, 18 January 2015).

to economic and political participation remains lack of security.

The delegates at the conference expressed confidence in the Afghan security forces and welcomed the signing of the bilateral security agreement and the state of forces agreement with the US and NATO respectively, though argued that, 'we need better reinforcement of our security forces and decisive international action to stop cross-border infiltration' (Afghan civil society spokesperson, Barry Salaam).

The weak judicial sector was also repeatedly cited among the delegates as a key neglected challenge for Afghanistan. Weak rule of law, including poor access to justice for women under informal, customary justice systems, was again cited as a neglected issue and area for attention in the Transformation Decade.

1.3 Economic context

There have been some hard-won gains in the last 13 years, particularly in health and education (see examples of these advances in section 2.2 on Service Delivery). However, human development indices in Afghanistan remain some of the worst in the world (standing at 175 out of 187 countries in the UNDP 2012 Human Development Report).

The reduction in aid flows, which are currently roughly equivalent to Afghanistan's Gross Domestic Product and a third of the country's Gross National Income, will have a significant impact (World Bank, 2014²). Concerns were widely expressed among the delegates about the future sustainability of basic services and the loss of hard-won gains in key service sectors. Unemployment and underemployment in Afghanistan, respectively estimated at 8 and 48 per cent, remain high (World Bank, 2014). These trends are only likely to rise with the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the reduction in aid flows and rising violence.

Currently Afghanistan has a poor enabling environment for business, trade and investment due to insecurity, weak institutions and poor infrastructure. A deeply embedded criminal economy has only been strengthened by decades of conflict and as aid declines, reliance on the opium economy and other illicit activities could increase (World Bank, 2014). Increased out-migration and radicalisation of young people is also a rising future risk that was identified by the conference delegates.

2 Transition in Afghanistan: Looking Beyond 2014, The World Bank, November 2011.

Nevertheless, it was recognised among many delegates that there is huge economic opportunity in Afghanistan, including the potential for equitable and transparent resource development, greater regional integration and development of its vast human resources (male and female). With these developments, however, come risks that need managing, if future conflict is to be prevented and the benefits fairly spread.

1.4 Social context

The Afghan delegates were keen to shift the portrayal of Afghanistan from 'the land of extremism' to one of a diverse, plural society made up of many ethnic groups. As one Afghan delegate put it, 'we are proud that Afghanistan has taken big strides in embracing diversity... Except for one obvious group, we see that Afghans from all walks of life and from all political and regional backgrounds participate in the government.' Women even make up thirty per cent of parliament, showing a better record than most western governments.

Nevertheless, while great strides have been made at the national level, huge stratifications persist across Afghanistan. There remains a deep centralisation of power in Kabul with vast regional differences in access to basic services. Significant legislative change, advances in girls' access to education and reductions in maternal mortality have been encouraging. However, Afghanistan still remains one of the most dangerous places for women and gender power relations remain largely unchanged within many households.

The inter-generational divide is also an increasing risk in Afghanistan. With 78 per cent of the population under 35 years old and a median age of 15.6 years, Afghanistan has a significant 'youth bulge.' Given the right opportunities, a young population can supply workers for a productive economy and be active participants in democracy. However, mass un/underemployment, a highly conservative and hierarchical society and the dichotomy in the portrayal of youth as 'ambassadors of change, unity and integrity' versus 'foot soldiers for extremists' is placing a strain on young people and their potential, positive role in the future of their country.

Added to this is the human suffering endured by the 1.1 million displaced people (IDPs and refugees) in Afghanistan. In 2014, 701,900 people were internally displaced, though this is a reduction of over fifty per cent compared to 2013 (UNHCR, 2014³).

1.5 Policy context:

The Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF), agreed at the Tokyo Conference in 2012, is the instrument through which civilian development assistance is provided to Afghanistan. The document

sets out a number of commitments, 16 for the Afghan Government and nine for the international community. This is based on 50 per cent of aid being aligned to the National Priority Programmes (NPP) and 50 per cent of aid channelled on budget.

In the two months of its existence prior to the conference, the National Unity Government has shown real commitments to taking forward the TMAF commitments, both in word and action. The Government's commitment is clearly stated in the Position Paper prepared for the London Conference, 'Realizing Self-Reliance'. Here, the Government lays out four key challenges facing Afghanistan and matches these with a series of commitments 'intended to give credibility to the claims through immediate and near-term actions, and to trigger a longer process of reform'. The Afghan delegates commended the National Unity Government on their 'ambitious reform agenda' and stated that the 'Self-Reliance' reform paper is, 'better than we could have hoped for' (Afghan civil society spokesperson).

"Realizing Self-Reliance: Commitments to Reforms and Renewed Partnership"
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, December 2014

'The newly formed Government of National Unity is committed to ensuring peace, stability and security in the country; to realizing self-reliance by enhancing productivity, growth and revenues; to improving the welfare and well-being of the people through better opportunities, governance and respect for human rights; to deepening democracy by taking up electoral reforms and institutional restructuring; and above all, to peaceful co-existence with its neighbours.'

The next step will be to build on the relationships, ideas and commitments generated in the Ayenda and London Conferences to develop practical plans for the implementation of the TMAF, the NPP and all the other legislative commitments already signed up to (such as the UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and the Elimination of Violence Against Women Law). As one international civil society delegate put it, 'The real work will be (done) at the Senior Officials Meeting.There is a danger if we focus too much on international mechanisms such as the TMAF. As a follow-up to this meeting, (civil society) need to have a substantive policy discussion with the government about their reforms.'

3 UNHCR Afghanistan Fact Sheet, September 2014.

2. PRIORITIES FOR THE TRANSFORMATION DECADE



Lyse Doucet introduces the Statements Session, Ayenda Conference

'Good governance, economic development and service delivery are the three pillars of nation-building. All are inter-linked and good governance is the backbone of these three areas'

(Deputy Minister Shafiq Ahmad Qarizada, Ministry of Finance, Government of Afghanistan).

I and the UK Government believe that the 'golden thread of development' lies where robust institutions come together with a strong civil society and a transformative economy

(Right Honourable. Desmond Swayne MP, Minister of State, Department for International Development).

This section summarises the key points that emerged from the Ayenda Conference and from the civil society periphery meetings that surrounded it. It provides a synopsis of key achievements and challenges from an Afghan civil society perspective under six different themes: governance, service delivery, economic development, civil society, women and youth. Under each theme there are specific recommendations from Afghan civil society as well as responses from the Afghan Government and international community panellists.

Mechanisms for the Future

The first session of the Ayenda Conference addressed the issue of 'mechanisms for the future'. The presentations and discussions were based around the 'pillars of nation-building' or the 'golden thread of development': good governance, service delivery and economic development. The summary below reflects the content of the discussion at the Ayenda Conference and at the civil society workshop the preceding day.

2.1 Good Governance

Contributors from the Afghan Government, international community and Afghan civil society at the Ayenda and London Conferences declared a new and commonly shared commitment to prioritise accountable and transparent governance in Afghanistan as the foundation for future security and prosperity. Civil society's role within this was also acknowledged by all. However, among the civil society delegates, there remained some significant reservations about the ability and commitment to implement these statements in practice, particularly on the side of the Afghan leadership.

'The advances won could be lost unless we step up. The Government must reform and strengthen the democratic institutions, support affirmative action to support women and minorities in decision-making and address the culture of impunity. Through long-term cooperation, the international community must support reforms that do not lead to parallel institutions and false competition between civil society and government.'

(Afghan civil society panellist on governance, Fahim Naim)

'The last decade has proved that democracy is the only way for Afghans to reunite and coexist with each other... Afghans are looking at the new unity government with great hope. The momentum for change and reform has been created, but this will now require strong political will and fearless action.'

(Afghan civil society spokesperson, Barry Salaam, Final Session).

2.1.1. Achievement & Challenges

Civil Society Perspective

The Afghan delegates were fully behind more democratic, plural governance in Afghanistan. This includes support for the National Unity Government's reform agenda and for the peace process, 'as long as it does not compromise the democratic process' (Afghan civil society spokesperson). However, the delegates felt that the current system is inherently undemocratic due to several reasons:

Lack of political parties to hold the leadership to account: This is 'particularly harmful as it allows individual politicians and powerful local (elites) to maintain their grip on the government' (Afghan civil society delegate).

Lack of transparency in election processes: This has undermined the integrity of the Government. If the upcoming parliamentary elections are to be meaningful (and not a cause for more violence) the absence of effective political parties and a transparent election process need to be addressed as a priority.

Too much power residing with the President: Currently the President elects Election Commission employees, controls the Elections Complaints Commission and the judicial system. This is fundamentally undemocratic and needs to be reformed.

A centralisation of power in Kabul: There has not been enough effort to extend governance to the country's villages and districts. Most government institutions lack buildings and facilities or work far away from areas under their jurisdiction. A centralised budget without sufficient provincial involvement in decision-making has also led to inequitable budget allocations and weak sub-national governance.

The existence of parallel government institutions: The duplication of work and limited cooperation between different Government institutions allows space for corruption and creates huge inefficiencies.

Lack of women and minorities in key decision-making positions in government and the judiciary: To achieve thirty per cent of women in parliament has been a key success in Afghanistan. However, women and minorities are still visibly absent from decision-making positions for planning, setting budgets and monitoring in all levels of local and national government institutions.

Lack of transparency in procurement and in the licensing and distribution of natural resource contracts (including water, mining and oil rights): This risks causing further conflict and under-development as local communities' rights and interests are ignored and public revenue collection is undermined as funds are syphoned off.

Lack of respect for civil society within government: To date civil society has been shown less respect than the international community by the Government. This is changing. However, mutual respect has to be earned and there remains an absence of mechanisms for the citizen and state to engage and hold each other to account.

Political interference and corruption in the rule of law: In many courts, money and power decide who is innocent or guilty. Only once the justice sector is free of corruption and political interference can it be addressed in other sectors.

Weak political will to enforce laws to combat discrimination and human rights abuses: Harboring corrupt officials and abusers of human rights by politicians fundamentally undermines Afghanistan's democratic system. Until the protection of the rights of all Afghan citizens are mainstreamed through all government programmes, these rights will not be respected.

Enforcement institutions unable to respond to the needs of women and children: Key legislation for the protection of women and children will only be enforced once the national police force and judiciary are reformed to address the needs of both.

Government of Afghanistan Perspective

Both the UK and Afghan Ministers agreed that corruption is the key issue for Afghanistan. Deputy Minister of Finance, Shafiq Ahmad Qarizada stated that corruption and the weak capacity of the law and order institutions in Afghanistan at the central and provincial levels is 'the priority of the National Unity Government'. He went on to say that, 'building institutions for fighting corruption in Afghanistan is crucial' and in this effort a government strategy to fight corruption is 'under discussion'.

In the last conference session, Dr Abdullah Abdullah (CEO for Afghanistan) reinforced this point saying, 'We have to uphold the rule of law. Reforms across the board are needed. Ashraf Ghani and I are on the same page on this'. He concluded by saying that Afghanistan needs a 'just peace' and that this will only be possible if, 'we enhance the people's confidence in our institutions.'

International Community Perspective

The UK Minister of State at the Department for International Development, Desmond Swayne MP, stated that the UK Government was pleased corruption was raised so prominently at the conference and in the recent election campaign, and that the Government of Afghanistan had sent 'a powerful message' by its determination to reopen the Kabul Bank Affair¹.

1. Senior executives at the Kabul National Bank have been accused of draining an estimated \$910m through interest-free 'insider loans'. In a country where GDP is just \$12bn, the fallout has been immensely damaging economically and reduced confidence in the Afghan banking sector.

2.1.2. Civil Society Recommendations on Governance

In partnership with civil society and the international community, the Afghan Government should:

Build Accountable Governance

Finalise the government anti-corruption strategy, ensuring the following issues are addressed:

- Meritocracy is a principle when appointing ministers and governors;
- Politicians who distribute projects, jobs and benefits along familial, ethnic and regional divisions are held to account;
- Incentives are provided for government employees to perform better and undertake key reforms;
- Commissions are reformed and strengthened to eradicate corruption and ensure independence (e.g. the Human Rights, Civil Service Reform and Election Commissions);
- The Anti-corruption Agency is re-established as an independent body with the appropriate powers and structure;
- Parallel government institutions are streamlined to minimise duplication and space for inefficiency and corruption;
- The principle of 'open contracting' is adopted. These are an emerging set of international principles to discourage corruption in service delivery and procurement;
- Clear and open principles for negotiation of mining contracts, worth 9 trillion dollars in Afghanistan, are agreed and monitored;
- Civil society is set up as a partner to monitor and provide oversight of government policies and programmes at local and national levels through the establishment of a national accountability programme.

Strengthen Rule of Law

- Prosecute all abusers of human rights and dismiss and hold to account all those in government who have protected them;
- Implement all laws pertaining to human rights protection including the Child Rights Act, the Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW) Law and the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA);
- Ensure the implementation of Presidential

Decree 45, which mandates that all inactive courts be activated and fully staffed with professionals, in particular women professionals;

- Work with civil society to address the role of the informal justice sector and the national police force in ensuring women have full and equal access to the law in practice.

Strengthen Inclusive Governance

- Move authority over planning and budgets beyond major urban centres and provincial capitals so that governors, provincial and district officials can work in partnership with their local civil society for more effective and accountable governance at the sub-national level;
- Ensure women and minorities are involved in decision-making positions for planning, setting budgets and monitoring in all levels of local and national government institutions;
- Work with and support civil society to provide an alternative voice to the Government in the absence of political parties. This should include formal recognition of civil society organisations; protection of civil activists (including journalists); a trust fund for building civil society capacity and mechanisms for engagement on the substance of planning, reform and delivery.



Freshta Karimi delivers the Civil Society statement at the Ayenda Conference

'Basic service delivery is essential to the concept of good governance. It raises questions about citizens' confidence and allegiance to the state.'

(Right Honourable Desmond Swayne MP, UK Minister of State, Department for International Development, DFID)

'There have been significant improvements in service delivery in the past decade. However, transition cannot happen overnight. This requires long term commitment and working in partnership to support the needs of people, based on their priorities.'

(International civil society panellist, Chelsea Purvis, International Rescue Committee)

'Civil society has played an important and active role even outside the big cities to allow the Afghan citizens access to justice by provision of legal aid and awareness, health and education services and by establishing a link between the national and sub-national communities.'

(Afghan civil society spokesperson, Freshta Karimi, Final Session).

2.2 Service Delivery

While certain details were contested (e.g. the level of reduction in maternal mortalities), the basic picture of service delivery in Afghanistan among the delegates of the Ayenda Conference was commonly understood. This is that great progress has been made in access to services but that a great deal more needs to be done to increase quality, equal access and national-led sustainability of services. Key concerns remain among civil society about how services are prioritised and for whom; how services will be financed and sustained in the longer term (with the reduction of aid volumes); and how Government will be made accountable to the Afghan people for delivering quality basic services.

2.2.1. Achievements & Challenges

Civil Society Perspectives

The Afghan delegates agreed that there have been significant improvements in service delivery in Afghanistan over the past decade. This is reflected in improved infrastructure, strengthened human resources, increased access to basic services and rising human development indicators. Life expectancy has, for example, risen from 42 in 2002 to 62 years¹, maternal deaths are significantly down and the number of children in school has risen from 1 to over 8.6 million². However, these are hard-won gains with 36 per cent of the population living under the poverty line and 25 per cent of the population undernourished³.

Civil society recognised that key challenges remain. Access remains uneven with significant variances according to gender and a strong urban bias. Insecurity continues to restrict access, affecting girls/women and rural areas most. Quality of service remains a critical problem, as does the low pay of service providers. Coordination over delivery of service is also poor, particularly as the private sector and NGOs compete for contracts.

1 USAID Engagement in Afghanistan 2014 and Beyond, USAID 2014.

2 Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review : Afghanistan, UN Human Rights Council, April 2014.

3 Millennium Development Goals Database, United Nations Statistics Division, July 2014.

Overall, the main concerns related to effective service delivery articulated by Afghan civil society delegates included:

How services are prioritised (by and for whom):

The Afghan delegates reinforced the long-held argument that priorities should be based on local and national rather than donor-lead priorities. Funds for basic service delivery have, for example, been more heavily focused until now on areas where foreign troops have been based.

The Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and Development Plans per village exist but donors do not sufficiently coordinate around these. This includes the World Bank-led multi-donor Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), through which 50 per cent of DFID funds are channelled.

How Government will be made accountable to the Afghan people for delivering quality basic services:

As part of the transition to self-sufficiency, the Afghan Government's accountability to its citizens needs to be prioritised. Monitoring systems with clear indicators are required to ensure that the ANDS is followed and implemented. There is an important role for civil society in monitoring to ensure accountability and locally defined priorities are met.

The civil society delegates also called on the international community to strengthen aid effectiveness. This included continued efforts to hold the Government to account for fulfilling democratic, anti-corruption principles.

How services will be financed and sustained in the longer term:

While civil society recognised the need to transition away from aid dependency, this transition will take time. Civil society therefore urged the international community to maintain its commitment to support this transition.

The short-termism of (quick impact) project support is also problematic for civil society, particularly as longer-term capacity building will be critical for supporting the transition to self-sufficiency.

Given the reduction in aid, civil society reinforced the need for a transition strategy to national self-sufficiency. This should include a long-term plan for service delivery financing and capacity development. This could include a public consultation on service user charges, backed up by a strong evidence base.

Some of the conference delegates questioned, for example, whether all costs should be 'free at the point of delivery' when the system cannot pay for it. One delegate asked, 'should the costs of school dormitories be free?' Another delegate argued, 'All the technical people agree on this' (that the service user charges need reviewing)...It is a political issue, but the politicians dare not say it'.

Government of Afghanistan Perspective

In response to the question of how Afghanistan will transition to self-sufficiency as aid volumes reduce, Afghan Deputy Minister of Finance, Shafiq Ahmad Qarizada, argued that a strategy for transition to self-sufficiency (developed at the Tokyo Conference) already exists. Instead he argued that what is needed now is, 'to start implementation of the strategy, based on the National Priority Programme... If this is delivered, we can ensure self-reliance'. He went on to agree with the civil society delegates arguing that, 'service delivery has been focused on quantity rather than quality. We need to switch this focus while also ensuring a fair distribution of services that reach those provinces that are under-served'.

Deputy Minister Qarizada also raised the issue of the Government's engagement with civil society. He stated that 'we do not have a systematic way of engaging with civil society. A system needs to be established. (Engagement) is on a very ad-hoc basis.' He continued by reinforcing civil society's own call for better follow-up by, and with, civil society following key events. Deputy Minister Qarizada said, 'Before Tokyo, we had a lot of discussion but there was no follow-up.... this should not happen again'. He finished by making a request of civil society, saying, 'criticising Government is good but also come up with solutions and push the Government to implement those solutions'.

International Community Perspective

In response to concerns about the longevity of aid, the UK Minister, Desmond Swayne MP, stated that UK Government budget cycles remain four yearly. However, he reinforced the UK Government's commitment to Afghanistan saying, 'we have supported Afghanistan for a long time. We are about

to deliver more. We do not want to look back in ten years' time and be blamed for not having done enough... Afghanistan, we are with you'. He also argued that sub-contraction of service delivery, such as healthcare, to civil society is a 'healthy move'.

2.2.2 Civil Society Recommendations on Service Delivery

Build a strategic partnership between civil society, government and the international community to plan and implement the commitments made in Tokyo and London for national self-sufficiency, including the following recommendations:

Needs-based service delivery

- Improve service delivery to the most contested and violent areas where populations are disproportionately suffering from inadequate service provision;
- Undertake a census to ensure budgets reflect each province's real population needs;
- Strengthen the role of civil society in planning for and allocation of provincial budgets to ensure local needs are better met;
- Increase consideration for the cultural context of issues in Afghanistan when designing services⁴.

Sustainable service delivery

Build revenue flows to sustain services

- Build a long-term transition plan and budget for national financing of service delivery, broken down by region and province;
- Review service user charges through evidence-based analysis and an open public consultation process;
- Reallocate international military expenditure to civilian purposes over time as the security situation stabilises, based on national priorities.

Build national capacity to deliver services

- Develop a long-term plan for capacity development for service delivery including government, private and civil society service providers, broken down by region and province⁵;
- Ensure better mechanisms to coordinate between service providers in Government, the private sector and civil society;

⁴ One example given by an Afghan civil society delegate was that the Constitution states that all girls must go to school but if a girl's family refuses there is no recourse or alternative for that girl. Service design needs therefore to be based on contextual understanding and adapt to these needs in reality.

⁵ The capacity plan should be based on clear market needs and capacity assessments to ensure budgets are targeted and effective.

- Draw on the sectoral expertise of civil society organisations in service delivery and better utilise them as focal points to coordinate and initiate collaborative programmes;
- Promote a shift in delivery of donor aid towards longer-term, capacity building projects (e.g. with three year rather than six month project cycles).

Accountable, quality service delivery

- Establish clear government reporting mechanisms to ensure basic quality of public services for all communities (linked to the ANDS);
- Ensure budget transparency at the provincial level;
- Recognise and support the role of civil society to monitor implementation of service delivery commitments as part of the Mutual Accountability Framework.

A lack of security, corruption, the black economy, the Kabul Bank crisis and defects in government tax collection matched by a lack of integration into the regional economy and lack of access to financial resources and transport infrastructure present major challenges to Afghanistan's economic development.'

(Afghan civil society panellist on economic development, Baryalai Omerzai)

'Afghanistan has the potential to become economically self-sufficient. But we need international investment and guidance to unleash our potential in mining, to develop our infrastructure, and to serve as a regional economic hub. So once again, we call for long-term financial and strategic support from the international community while it monitors the progress on reforms.'

(Afghan civil society spokesperson, Barry Salaam, Final Session).

'There has been good economic growth in Afghanistan in the past 13 years but this growth is not sustainable firstly, because it is heavily driven by international support and secondly, due to a focus on small-scale programmes.'

(Deputy Minister Shafiq Ahmad Qarizada, Ministry of Finance, Government of Afghanistan)

2.3 Economic Development

All the conference delegates recognised the economic gains in Afghanistan over the last decade, but that aid dependency, insecurity and weak infrastructure make these gains very fragile. It was, however, the drain of the illicit economy on the formal economy, matched by weak rule of law, that was widely believed to be the most critical issue to address. This included calls for more robust legal and institutional frameworks to transform Afghanistan's substantial physical and human resource potential to economic growth.

2.3.1. Achievements & Challenges

Civil Society Perspective

The Afghan civil society delegates believed that in the past decade there have been signs of economic growth, such as through rising incomes and a 'flourishing private sector'. Some improved aspects

'Economic growth is the key to rooting out the underlying causes of the insurgency and human insecurity. A few days ago, security forces arrested a man who planted a bomb in exchange for only six dollars.'

(Afghan civil society spokesperson, Barry Salaam, Final Session)

of the legal, regulatory framework have assisted this as has broader macro-economic growth in general. However these gains were felt to be shallow.

Dependency on aid, continued insecurity and rampant corruption, it was believed, create poor conditions for long-term stability. A weak legal framework for business, such as in procurement law or in the negotiation of mining contracts, matched by weak enforcement of laws means that, as one Afghan delegate put it, 'the Afghan Government has no control over the open market'. Instead, he argued, 'the economy is controlled by the mafia... and dependent on narcotics', which in turn, increases levels of violence and denies the state critical tax revenues.

Lack of access to finance and a weak financial sector, weak transport and communication infrastructure and limited technical human capital also means that business cannot be a driver of growth. Poor regional integration through trade agreements and continued 'outside interference' only reinforces Afghanistan's trembling economy.

The delegates argued, nevertheless, that there are opportunities to do more with the resources available in Afghanistan: these include water, agriculture and human capital (men and women).

Government of Afghanistan Perspective

Afghan Deputy Minister of Finance Qarizada, reiterated that there has been good economic growth in the past 13 years but that this growth is not sustainable as it is heavily driven by international support. He argued that the focus for growth needs to shift from small to large-scale investment programmes. This includes investment in, for example, Afghanistan's electricity potential in order to switch from being an energy importer to an energy exporter.

International Community Perspective

The UK Government Minister, Desmond Swayne MP, argued that, 'it is essential to do more to gear up the engine of economic growth, the private sector, and to ensure jobs for women.'

2.3.2 Civil Society Recommendations on Economic Development

In partnership with civil society and the international community, the Afghan Government should:

Build secure economic conditions

- Show the political will to enforce the rule of law, critical for the economy. This includes working with the international community and regional actors to control the illicit economy both nationally and regionally;
- Advance regulatory reforms, both to counter corruption and to create a more business-friendly environment (such as streamlining licensing laws and facilitating mobile banking);
- Prioritise the effective management and oversight of the mining sector. This should not mean 'mining at any cost'. Prioritisation does not mean getting contracts signed as soon as possible, but building appropriate capacity with a strong legal and policy framework in place first;
- Build regional collaborations to support establishment of Afghanistan's huge water energy potential to both ensure access to markets and manage potential regional conflicts.

Invest in key economic resources

- Prioritise investment in infrastructure including in transport, digital and energy infrastructure for agriculture, trade and the extractive industries;
- Increase access to finance such as loan and investment facilities, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises;
- Develop human capital, including technical and vocational training, especially in rural areas. This should include strengthening the competitiveness of Afghan manufacturing and agriculture on the global market by supporting

vocational training programmes on quality standards and market analysis;

- Strengthen women's participation in the economy, especially in the non-traditional female sectors, by ensuring financing, infrastructure and support is accessible to both genders equally. This might include developing gender-specific budgets across different ministries.

People for the Future

The second session of the Ayenda Conference addressed the issue of 'people for the future'. The presentations and discussions were based around some of the key achievements and challenges surrounding the role of non-state actors in Afghanistan's Transformation Decade: civil society, women and youth. The summary below reflects the content of the discussion at the Ayenda Conference and at the civil society workshop the preceding day.

2.4 Civil Society

2.4.1 Achievements & Challenges

All the delegates at the Ayenda Conference were vocal about the important role civil society plays in all provinces and sectors of Afghan society from human rights protection to supporting good governance and service delivery. Given the limited space for civil society during the Taliban regime, the scale of their growth over the past decade was well recognised.

Initially weary of being pigeon-holed as a homogenous group and of the rhetoric of partnership, the civil society delegates were emboldened by the strength of support for them and their multiple, plural role in the future of Afghanistan. Both the Government and civil society delegates showed a new openness to working together. Added to this, however, was a sense of frustration on both sides about the lack of constructive mechanisms and ideas for how this might happen in practice.

The civil society delegates at the Ayenda Conference were keen to congratulate the Afghan leadership on a peaceful transition to a newly elected Government and on their 'ambitious reform agenda'. They were keen also to address the imbalance of power between the state and civil society that has presided to date. In the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, an advocacy role for civil society was recognised. At the London Conference, the Afghan civil society delegates were keen to have a stronger oversight role in the longer term.

Civil Society Perspective

The Afghan delegates presented the message that, 'civil society is neither a competitor nor an adversary

'Civil society is a good ally in spreading awareness about human rights, democracy and media protection. This is an achievement and their role should be recognised by the Government and international community.'

(Afghan civil society panellist on civil society, Abdul Wadood Pedram)

'Over the last decade, a new generation of women and men has emerged. They are highly educated and dedicated. They are in the media, in the private sector, in civil society, and in government. They are the force for change, and with your support over the next decade, they will be empowered to lead Afghanistan towards a brighter future – a future we can all be proud of.' *(Afghan civil society spokesperson, Barry Salaam, Final Session)*

'Civil society, we rely on you and believe in you and have seen many changes as a result of civil society actions. Your words matter... As agents of change in society you are a partner in the National Unity Government, I can assure you of that.' *(His Excellency Dr Abdullah Abdullah, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for Afghanistan, Final Session)*

"It is now time for a more sincerely committed government to act in partnership with civil society. We welcome Dr. Abdullah's public commitments on this (and encourage his government) to speed up the process to achieve lasting change" *(Afghan civil society spokesperson, Freshta Karimi, Final Session).*

'I and the UK Government are personally committed to Afghan civil society.' *(Right Honourable Justine Greening MP, UK Secretary of State for International Development, Final Session)*

to government but a vital and complementary component through which the views and needs of its citizens are understood, expressed and met' (Afghan Civil Society Position Paper, Civil Society Joint Working Group, December 2014). The civil society delegates were proud to remind the audience that, over the past 13 years, the presence of civil society has increased across the country, reaching all of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. Civil society has succeeded in influencing national policy, has a critical role in service delivery especially in the health and education sectors, is an active advocate for freedom of speech through a vibrant media, is a leader in human rights protection and an active participant in demanding and monitoring good governance.

The civil society delegates recognised that key challenges for civil society in Afghanistan remain. These include questions of how representative

civil society actors and organisations are, issues of 'form over substance' and duplication of work, as well as challenging working environments (e.g. where warlords control local government operations). Issues of poor coordination amongst civil society groups, as well as between civil society, government and the international community were also a key, identified challenge. This is reinforced, it was argued, by a lack of formal recognition of civil society's role by the state, and no clear strategy for civil society inclusion in governance, service delivery and other processes.

The delegates felt that the Afghan media continues to be let down by the Government for failing to protect them from violence and intimidation. This only reinforces the absence of women from the sector. The interference of regional players in funding anti-democratic media also makes intimidation more challenging to counter. The push by the Ministry for Culture for a state-run media arm is also of concern to civil society.

Some delegates expressed concerns about what the new Government's election would mean for civil society. This includes the risk of possible new restrictions to their operations. The delegates were fearful of the co-option of civil society by the state and international community. As one delegate put it, civil society is frequently a 'soft tool' in the hands of Afghan policy makers and the international community where the 'symbolic figure of civil society' is manipulated to further different objectives. Against this background, civil society in Afghanistan strives for greater independence.

Government of Afghanistan Perspective

Her Excellency Professor Hussun Banu Ghazanfar (Acting Minister of Women's Affairs, Government of Afghanistan) stressed the need for the international community to respect the Tokyo commitments, to continue to channel aid through the Afghan national budget and to increase aid transparency for two-way transparency. 'Then the people will trust us', she said. She also called on the international community to honour their \$400 million commitment to the Promote Project to empower young Afghan women.

In the final session, Dr Abdullah Abdullah (CEO for Afghanistan) reinforced 'the important role of civil society to determine the future course of our country' arguing that, 'the growth of civil society in Afghanistan is a success in itself.' Recognising the role of civil society in the democratic process, Dr Abdullah went on to argue that, 'people took a risk to participate in elections because all other means to be involved in the governance of their country had failed. We have made sacrifices to reach these achievements. Civil society has been a leading partner in this transformation'.

Looking forward, Dr Abdullah said, 'we trust civil

society, we have listened and learned from you and will continue to work together in order to open brighter horizons....As agents of change in society you are a partner in the National Unity Government, I can assure you of that¹.

International Community Perspective

Catherine Russell (the US Ambassador at Large for Global Women's Issues) agreed that a new chapter was beginning in Afghanistan and the Government were already making an effort to engage with civil society. 'The pen is in your hands', she said. She argued that the success of the Tokyo Agreement should be measured against how civil society and government work together on its implementation.

Baroness Northover (Permanent Under-Secretary of State, DFID) also wanted to highlight the key of role civil society in Afghanistan to date, and in the future. 'You are the voices of Afghanistan', she said. 'Progress on priority issues, such as women's rights, is dependent on you getting your voices heard. Your Government has made a commitment to listen. Use this opportunity.' As an example, she suggested that Afghan civil society use the mechanisms at their disposal such as the newly signed Access to Information Bill.

In the final session of the conference, the Right Honourable Justine Greening MP, (UK Secretary of State for International Development), stated that in the organisation of the Ayenda and London Conferences, it was important for the UK Government 'to give civil society its proper place'. She stressed just how much progress had been made considering that 13 years ago there were no government institutions with whom to engage, let alone space for civil society to operate in Afghanistan.

Now civil society organisations are the 'trail blazers' for opening up communities and providing voice to the people. This, Justine Greening argued, was reflected in the 'impressive' diversity of Afghan delegates at the Ayenda Conference in London. The Secretary of State went on to give a personal commitment and a commitment from her Government to continue supporting civil society in Afghanistan.

2.4.2. Civil Society Recommendations on Civil Society

- The Government and international community should recognise civil society as a serious stakeholder in national peace and development processes through developing a joint strategy for engagement on policy reform, planning/needs assessment, service delivery, monitoring and evaluation;

¹ The value and role of civil society is also firmly outlined in the Government paper produced for the London Conference. Here it states that, 'Afghanistan has a visible and vocal civil society, which has proven to be an important partner. We recognise their importance and would like to build an open and strong civil society' (Realising Self-Reliance: Commitments to reforms and Renewed Partnership, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, December 2014).

- Establish a trust fund to support the sustainable development and outreach of civil society in Afghanistan. To ensure civil society are accountable to their beneficiaries and donors, this should include support for capacity-building, coordination, monitoring and evaluation;
- Support the development of an independent media sector by training journalists (especially female journalists) and building a public television service that is independent of the Ministry of Culture;
- Ensure protection of, and judicial recourse for, violence and intimidation against civilian activists and journalists in all provinces;
- Civil society should work to strengthen its own independence and accountability by building strategies for winning public funding and developing an internal regulatory mechanism for aid effectiveness and appropriate use of funds.



Ambassador Russell speaks on the People for the Future panel, Ayenda Conference

2.5 Youth

'Youth are not taken seriously. Youth are the leaders of today and the hope for tomorrow. Not the leaders of tomorrow' (Afghan civil society panellist on youth, Azaryoun Matin).

'Today, our young generation is breaking traditional bonds to form new civil and political movements, centred on democratic values.'

(Afghan civil society spokesperson, Barry Salaam, Final Session).

2.5.1. Achievements & Challenges

Seventy-eight per cent of the Afghan population are 'young' (under 35 years). The civil society delegates agreed that youth in Afghanistan have played an important role in their country's transition to a more democratic society and are also potential obstacles to peace, if their needs are not met. As such, it was agreed that youth are an important cohort of the population that require support. There was, however, less agreement on what age-specific support they need, nor clear consensus on the merits of age-specific policies or institutions.

Civil Society Perspective

The delegates agreed that there have been some gains for youth in a number of areas over the past ten years in Afghanistan. Most keenly felt was a sense of nationhood that has been captured by some parts of Afghan youth. As 'ambassadors of change, unity and integrity' the civil society delegates felt that young people represent a new 'national unity'.

Young people have also benefited from investments in free education, in business and sports. Their awareness of politics has been strengthened with increased participation in parliament and in protests. Their presence is also more keenly felt in the private sector, particularly in the growth of telecommunications and social media.

Structurally there have also been changes. A Department for Youth exists within the Ministry for Culture as do specific funding lines and programmes targeting youth issues. Youth issues are increasingly being addressed by civil society in general, though few youth-specific NGOs/CSOs exist. An active 'New Leader' platform has also been created for and by youth to ensure youth voices are heard through social media.

Major challenges remain, however. Despite a 597 per cent increase in incomes over 12 years to 2013, unemployment has remained very high amongst educated and unskilled youth alike, with rural youth being most profoundly affected (World Bank

Databank, 2015)¹. Age restrictions on recruitment in civil service and election law in the past also means that a culture of age discrimination across government recruitment and progression persists still today.² As a result, many young people leave Afghanistan for neighbouring countries every year and suffer from psychological and drug problems. Youth un/underemployment and the continued, active presence of radical groups, also risk radicalising some youth. This risk includes radicalisation of students within some universities and the Islamic education sector³.

While there was agreement among the civil society delegates about some of the challenges and opportunities for youth in Afghanistan, there was disagreement about how youth issues should be addressed, whether it be through the sector-specific ministries or separately under a Youth Ministry and budget line.

While a Youth Policy exists, the civil society delegates felt that little has been done to implement it in practice. Youth-focused programmes, it was argued, remain the preserve mainly of urban youth and these favour certain groups over others. Young women, in particular, continue to be neglected in youth policy and programming.

Government of Afghanistan Perspective

In addressing the role of youth in Afghanistan's Transformation Decade, the Government representatives from Afghanistan, the UK and US Government all spoke of the need to support girls. The Government speaker from the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Professor Hussun Banu Ghazanfar, spoke of prioritising girl's rights in the context of women's empowerment through the National Action Plan, the Anti-Violence Act and education programmes, such as the Promote Project. More specifically, she spoke of the need to address informal customs inherited from the Taliban related to early/forced marriage of girls. She argued that the Government is working with religious leaders to raise awareness of these issues.

International Community Perspective

The issue of youth and their role in the new Afghanistan was again not directly addressed by the US or the UK Government spokespersons beyond the issue of gender equality. Baroness Northover

1 In 2012, for example, while unemployment was at 8.6 per cent across the whole population, it was at 19.5 per cent for those between 15 and 24 years (World Bank Databank, 2015).

2 Until only recently (when the law was changed in 2014), Afghan civil service and election law set age restrictions for membership of civil service commissions and decision-making institutions such as the Wolesi Jirga (the House of People) and the Meshrano Jirga (the House of Elders) (see Qasim Hashimzai, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Legal System and Research, December 2014).

3 In a 2014 study on radicalization of students in eight universities across Afghanistan, research suggests that while, in general, universities themselves are not the source of radicalisation, the potential is there for external groups who see universities as accessible grounds for mobilization (R. Zamam and A.A. Mohammadi, Trends in Student Radicalization across University Campuses in Afghanistan, Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies, October 2014).



CEO Abdullah speaks during the Statements Session, Ayenda Conference

spoke, for example, of DFID's support to education reaching 180,000 Afghan girls.

2.5.2. Civil Society Recommendations on Youth

Civil society, the Afghan Government and international community should work in partnership to:

- Develop practical recommendations to address youth-specific needs and rights to inform the implementation of the Youth Inclusion Policy and other sectoral policies relevant to youth;
- Allocate budgets to ensure the practical implementation of the Youth Inclusion Policy, based on the above.

Civil society, the Afghan Government and international community should work in partnership to address the following sectoral issues from a youth perspective:

Education:

- Develop a government strategy to improve vocational and professional youth skills for today's local and global economy. This should include better preparing Afghan youth for employment opportunities outside the country, especially for girls;
- Work to counter radicalisation of the Islamic education sector so that it supports religious, cultural and democratic values among youth.

Economic development:

- Support employment generation that fits the skills and interests of Afghan youth as well as market demands in Afghanistan and beyond;
- Support business to offer vocational training and mentoring of youth from different backgrounds;
- Better consider how young women from different backgrounds can enter the work place on a more equal footing (beyond the traditional, female, economic sectors).

Peace and security:

- Strengthen the role of young people in decision-making in the peace process;
- Address the motivations for youth support of radical, anti-democratic movements in Afghanistan and support their inclusion in the development of a new, inclusive democratic political party culture. For example, build a better understanding of the interlinking issues of youth unemployment, rural youth and the radicalisation of youth in Afghanistan as a priority.

“We have come a long way on women and girls’ rights, but we need to go further because Afghan women are strong and can help lead an Afghanistan where everyone will enjoy their lives with full respect.”

(Afghan civil society panellist on women, Frozan Mashal)

“The Afghan Government supports the rights of women... the implementation of the National Action Plan (on Women in Afghanistan) is at the top of our agenda.”

(Professor Hussun Banu Ghazanfar, Acting Minister for Women’s Affairs, Government of Afghanistan).

“Violence against girls and women is a strategic priority for the UK Government.”

(Justine Greening MP, UK Secretary of State for International Development).

“I underscore the commitment of the US to Afghanistan and Afghan women. We stand behind and beside you towards a brighter future.”

(Catherine M. Russell, United States Ambassador at Large for Global Women’s Issues)

2.6. Women

2.6.1. Achievements & Challenges

Civil Society Perspective

As one Afghan civil society delegate put it at the Ayenda Conference, ‘Afghanistan is the worst place in the world to live for a woman’. Given the potential future deterioration in security and livelihoods in Afghanistan, the civil society delegates expressed their concern about rising violence and discrimination against women if the Government steps back from implementing its commitments to women’s rights.

As a priority, the delegates called for political leadership and ring-fenced budgets to ensure the implementation of existing laws to protect women’s rights in Afghanistan. The Afghan delegates also argued that when addressing women’s rights, the starting point should be how gender relations are understood in Afghanistan. That is with respect for Islamic law and traditions and an understanding of the contradictions of gender relations embedded in Afghan society today. This includes the contradictions in how women’s rights are addressed under customary, Islamic and formal law, the contradiction between expectations of women in the home versus women in education and the work place, and the different expectations of women’s roles between the urban elite and rural communities. Focus should also be placed on the gender-based issues faced by Afghan men and boys.

Government of Afghanistan Perspective

Professor Ghazanfar, Acting Minister for Women’s Affairs in Afghanistan, reconfirmed that, ‘the Afghan Government supports the rights of women’. She said the implementation of the 10-year National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan was at the ‘top of the agenda’. She also reported that the second report on the implementation of ERAW Law is being published.

Professor Ghazanfar stated that the Government’s priorities are to strengthen women’s access to justice and their role in the national police force, to provide protection through the provision of shelters across the country, to enhance the economic empowerment of women through vocational training and establishment of a women’s university as well as through the promotion of greater public awareness on issues of equality.

The Minister for Women’s Affairs argued, however, that while there are indications of progress, cultural change ‘will take time’. One structural challenge identified by the Minister was the lack of institutional outreach of the Women’s Affairs Department to rural areas to address issues such as early and forced marriage.

In the final session of the conference, Dr Abdullah Abdullah, CEO for Afghanistan, indicated the National Unity Government’s commitment to gender parity by its recent agreement to ensure that at least four members of the cabinet are women. This was, he remarked, ‘the only issue over which the different parties did not hold any differences’¹.

International Community Perspective

Catherine Russell (the US Ambassador at Large for Global Women’s Issues) stated that the London Conference was a positive follow-up to the recent Oslo Symposium on Advancing Women’s Rights and Empowerment where First Lady Rhula Ghani made her call to action for Afghan women to be proud and stand up. She argued that civil society, government and the international community should work together in the lead up to the Senior Officials Meeting in Kabul to review the implementation of the Tokyo Agreement according to indicators of gender equality.

She went on to say, ‘I underscore the commitment of the US to Afghanistan and Afghan women. Our

1 Since the conference, President Ghani has announced the 25 ministers in the unity cabinet, including three women in the portfolios of women’s affairs, culture and higher education, though this is still has to be approved by parliament (BBC, 15 January 2015).

job is not just to hold the line but to move forward to support women's political, economic and social rights (so that) women are included as decision-makers, business leaders and judges. We stand behind and beside you towards a brighter future'.

In the final session of the Ayenda Conference, the UK Secretary of State for International Development, Justine Greening MP, told the audience that addressing violence against girls and women was a 'strategic priority' for the UK. 'A country cannot develop if it leaves half its population behind', she argued, 'though it will take time', reminding the audience that it took women over half a century to gain the vote in Britain.

2.6.2. Civil Society Recommendations on Women

Build Inclusive Governance

- Ensure women's participation in all levels of government with full authority. This should include 30 per cent of women in all political institutions and women at Director and Deputy Minister levels;
- Ensure gender-sensitive budgeting across all ministries and involve women in all phases of budget formulation (planning, implementation and monitoring);
- Extend the institutional outreach of the Women's Affairs Department beyond urban centres and ensure other ministries with this outreach work in coordination around aligned objectives.

Ensure Inclusive Peace, Security & Justice

- Support women's full and meaningful participation in the peace process, including at all levels of the security forces;
- Prioritise the finalisation and full implementation of all commitments including the National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and the Law on the Elimination of Violence Against Women;
- Reform the formal justice sector to increase women's access to justice, particularly in rural areas. This includes extending the establishment of prosecution offices across all regions of Afghanistan;
- Fund more shelters to support survivors of violence who find it difficult to access these lifesaving services.

Support Women's Education and Economic Empowerment

- Support retention of girls in education by supporting community schools, increasing security around schools, training more female teachers and raising awareness about the harm

of early marriage;

- Improve the effectiveness and quality of literacy courses for women so that they are 'fit for purpose';
- Support women entrepreneurs to move beyond traditional business sectors through increased access to finance and skills development;
- Prioritise Women and Girls' Health and Well-being;
- Increase the number of rural clinics to further reduce maternal death rates;
- Improve health services to address women's specific psychological and mental health needs.

3. OUTCOMES & NEXT STEPS

Mechanisms for the Future panel discussion, Ayenda Conference

'Civil Society's consultation and their position papers about national policies should be based on evidence and views from all over Afghanistan. They should be rigorously collected and effectively presented to the Government and donors.'

(Afghan civil society delegate, Fahim Naimi)

'We do not have a systematic way of engaging with civil society. A system needs to be established....Before Tokyo, we had a lot of discussion but there was no follow-up.... this should not happen again'

(Deputy Minister Qarizada, Ministry of Finance, Government of Afghanistan)

'In the decade of transformation we have taken a very big step today. Civil society can feel undermined. Civil society wants to be recognised, respected and supported. Its role is not only to hold you (the Government) to account but (to take) a place at the table.'

(Conference Chair for the Final Session, Lyse Doucet, BBC).

Following the Ayenda and London Conferences, the next step will be to build on the relationships, ideas and commitments generated to develop practical plans for the implementation of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF), the National Priority Programme (NPP) and other legislative commitments. In the spirit of partnership, the Afghan civil society delegates of the Ayenda Conference support the following follow-up actions before the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) in mid-2015:

Recommended Action for 2015

Broadly, the Afghan Government and civil society should:

1. Develop a cooperation strategy for joined-up engagement on policy reform, planning/needs assessment, service delivery, monitoring and evaluation at national and sub-national levels. This should include setting civil society up as an oversight partner of government policies and programmes through civil society participation in relevant structures such as the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board.
2. Work to strengthen civil society's own independence and accountability. This should include civil society building their own

strategies for winning public funding, for aid effectiveness/appropriate use of funds and effective engagement with government.

Specifically, in preparation for the Senior Officials' Meeting in Kabul, mid-2015, the Afghan Government and civil society, with international support should:

1. Agree on the aims, agenda and process for the Senior Officials Meeting. This planning should include consideration of the priorities and recommendations outlined in this paper, in line with the Government's 'Self-Sufficiency' Paper;
2. Establish Advisory Committees made up of key civil society, business and government experts to support the TMAF refresh and SOM process from a particular theme or sectoral perspective. These committees would have responsibility for gathering evidence, providing advice, coordinating inputs to the process and reporting on the outcomes;
3. Review implementation of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework including analysis of the causes for certain successes and failures in its delivery. This review should include indicators for gender equality and state-civil society cooperation.



Frozan Mashal speaks during the People For the Future panel, Ayenda Conference

Conclusion

Afghanistan is at a key point in its history, and in this important year, the Afghan Government and civil society delegates at the London and Ayenda Conferences took an important step. ‘Just being here is an achievement in itself’, one international delegate remarked.

For the first time, a common commitment was publically made by all participating entities to work together for Afghanistan’s future. In this partnership, some shared principles stood out very clearly. These include working together to build a self-sufficient nation that is proud of its democratic, inclusive and accountable principles and practice.

The UK and US Governments re-stated their commitment to supporting Afghanistan’s Transformation Decade. They also welcomed the Afghan Government’s leadership in stepping up to the challenge of building self-reliance through inclusive and accountable governance.

The Communiqué from the London Conference on December 4th reaffirmed these commitments. It also welcomed the Afghan Government’s pledge to ensure ‘constructive, on-going dialogue with civil society, including Afghan women’s organisations, to ensure Afghan civil society’s full and meaningful involvement in key political

processes, strengthening governance and the rule of law, as well as the development, oversight and monitoring of the refreshed TMAF.’

Following the Ayenda Conference, the civil society delegates subscribe to this pledge and look forward to welcoming a new and renewed partnership with the Afghan Government, with support from the international community.



People for the Future panel, Ayenda Conference

Annex 1: Ayenda Conference Methodology

The objective of the Ayenda Conference was to ensure Afghan civil society was facilitated and supported from an international platform to better engage with the new Afghan Government and its international partners on key development priorities and deliverables.

The conference was the culmination of a series of activities, including:

1. Preliminary Research and Consultation

BAAG based its initial plans on the lessons learned from previous civil society input into donor conferences, soliciting the views of organisations and individuals involved from the London 2006 conference to the Tokyo 2012 conference.

A questionnaire was prepared for semi-structured phone or face-to-face interviews with Afghan and international civil society organisations, groups and networks, plus other key stakeholders involved in conferences. These interviews were conducted in April and May 2014. Past experiences and recommendations were sought from each. In addition, reports and minutes of planning meetings from previous conferences were studied and incorporated into the findings.

A Consolidated Lessons Learned document was finalised in late May 2014. This was shared with the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID), other international government contacts and Afghan and international civil society networks. The findings and recommendations of the report were considered in the planning process, such as: facilitating a coordinated, Afghan civil society-led process and the need for coordinated and early media engagement, a balanced and fair selection process for Afghan conference delegates, regional consultation on policy papers and the need for systematic follow-up mechanisms post-conference.

During July and August 2014 visits to Kabul, BAAG staff met with representatives of UNAMA's Civil Society Support Group the Civil Society Joint Working Group (CS-JWG) DFID, ACBAR (Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief & Development), Counterpart International and various Afghan and international civil society organisations. The overall objective of these meetings and semi-structured interviews was to discuss how, or if, groups were coordinating, to understand civil society's aspirations for the London Conference/Ayenda events, to clarify which position papers were being developed and to discuss options for the selection and election of civil society delegates to travel to London.

In total, 23 interviews were conducted with members of 17 civil society networks and organisations, and two group meetings were held with the CS-JWG. BAAG prepared a full report of the exercise which was shared with DFID and other British and international government agencies, NGOs and BAAG partners.

2. Selection of Delegates

During Civil Society Support Group's interactions with CS-JWG in August 2014, it was agreed that the latter would coordinate an election process to select the Afghan civil society delegates for the Ayenda Conference. From these delegates would be selected the two Civil Society Spokespeople invited to attend the ministerial-level London Conference.

CS-JWG started the election process at the provincial level in late August. Four candidates were elected per province (two men, two women). These candidates were then entered into regional elections, which produced sixteen regional delegates.

A final election of Kabul-based delegates was held in the capital in early September and was observed by BAAG's Director, representatives of UNAMA's CSSG and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC). This resulted in a final group of 54 regional and Kabul delegates. In addition, a parallel election process was undertaken in July by ACBAR, resulting in an additional seven ACBAR-supported delegates.

These combined groups of delegates represented a wide cross-section of organisations, thematic expertise and provincial coverage. Of the 61 who applied for UK visas, 53 delegates were granted these and able to travel to London.

3. Development and Dissemination of Position Papers

Afghan and international civil society organisations undertook preparations in mid-2014 to develop position papers and advocacy letters aimed at London Conference participants. Where possible, BAAG facilitated dissemination of these, both directly to specific government and policy-maker contacts and more widely via its website and dedicated Ayenda webpage.

In addition, BAAG, UNAMA and the CSSG, along with Counterpart International supported the development, drafting and finalisation of the CS-JWG working papers and final position paper. A launch and press conference for the position paper was held on 26th November in Kabul.

Ahead of the London Conference, BAAG and ENNA (European Network of NGOs in Afghanistan) collaborated to produce a synthesis of three Afghan civil society papers and the papers of 11 international NGO or networks, with the aim to inform discussions before, during and after the conference. In total, 17 position papers by Afghan and international organisations were shared by BAAG ahead of and during the Ayenda Conference.

4. Selecting Advocacy Priorities in Kabul and London

In Afghanistan (Kabul and the regions), the consultation process with Afghan civil society organisations in the development of the CS-JWG papers was pivotal in the selection of advocacy priorities. Basing these on both the commitments set out in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework and on President Ghani's reform plans, the CS-JWG Technical Committee, responsible for the development of the Conference position paper and activities, managed both the launch of the final paper and secured important advocacy meetings with the Afghan Government's London Conference team and the donors. BAAG, Counterpart International and the CSSG supported this process by hosting and observing CS-JWG meetings, providing the technical review of papers and securing media coverage.

Following the appointment of the President of Afghanistan, BAAG presented a letter on behalf of their members to His Excellency Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, copying Prime Minister Cameron and the Secretaries of State for International Development and Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs. Referring to the upcoming London Conference, the letters prioritised government attention on the protection of human rights for all Afghans, the meaningful involvement of civil society in political and policy processes and the partnership of government and civil society in the delivery of basic services.

BAAG also participated in meetings with ENNA (European Network of NGOs in Afghanistan) in November to develop priority advocacy messages for EU policy-makers attending the London Conference.

Finally, on 2nd December BAAG held a day-long Afghan and International Civil Society Workshop in London. It brought together the Afghan delegates with international civil society, academics and other development experts, with a view to agree on key priorities for Afghanistan beyond 2014, prepare for the key advocacy events and media opportunities of the coming days and finalise the presentations of the civil society spokespeople.

Annex 2: Ayenda Conference Agenda

1410 - 1440	<p>Opening session</p> <p>Welcome speech - Jenny Humphreys, Programme Coordinator, British & Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG)</p> <p>Keynote speech - Jawed Nader, Director, British & Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG)</p>
1440 – 1550	<p>Session One</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panel discussion followed by Q&A: Mechanisms for the Future (Good governance, economic development and service delivery) Chair: Michael Keating, Senior Consulting Fellow, Chatham House Fahim Naim, Free & Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan Chelsea Purvis, International Rescue Committee Baryalai Omerzai, Afghan Community Rehabilitation Unit Rt Hon. Desmond Swayne MP, Minister of State, Department for International Development, UK Deputy Minister of Finance (Policy), Shafiq Ahmad Qarizada, Ministry of Finance, Government of Afghanistan
1550 - 1605	<p>Refreshment break</p>
1605 - 1615	<p>Screening of Afghanaid video</p>
1615-1730	<p>Session Two</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panel discussion followed by Q&A: People for the Future (Women, Youth and Civil Society) Chair: Dr Stuart Gordon, Assistant Professor, London School of Economics Frozan Mashal, Public Awareness Time Hour Organisation Azaryoun Matin, Human Rights Focus Organisation Abdul Wadood Pedram, Human Rights & Eradication of Violence Organisation Catherine M. Russell, United States Ambassador at Large for Global Women’s Issues Baroness Northover, Permanent Under Secretary of State, Department for International Development, UK H.E Professor Hussun Banu Ghazanfar, Acting Minister of Women’s Affairs, Government of Afghanistan
1730-1810	<p>Statement session</p> <p>Chair: Lyse Doucet, Chief International Correspondent, BBC</p> <p>Afghan civil society statement by Ms Freshta Karimi & Mr Barry Salaam</p> <p>Responses by Rt Hon. Justine Greening MP, UK Secretary of State for International Development and H.E Dr Abdullah Abdullah, Chief Executive Officer for Afghanistan</p> <p>Q&A discussion with the audience</p>
1810 -1820	<p>Closing remarks</p> <p>Elizabeth Winter, Senior Adviser Policy & Advocacy, BAAG</p>

Annex 3: Ayenda Conference List of Delegates

Approximately 250 people attended the Ayenda Conference on 3rd December 2014. These included 53 Afghan civil society delegates, as well as representatives from:

- National country delegations (attending the London Conference)
- NATO, EU, UNAMA and other UN agencies
- Academics and think-tank researchers and specialists
- British, European, American and Japanese INGOs and INGO networks
- Representatives of the UK Government's DFID and FCO
- Afghan diaspora
- Afghan, British and international media

The following Afghan civil society activists were invited to the Ayenda Conference¹:

Name	Organisation
Barry Salaam	7 TV / Organization of Afghan Alumni
Azizurrahman Rafiee	Afghan Civil Society Forum-organization (ACSFO)
Barialai Barialai	Afghan Community Rehabilitation Unit (ACRU)
Nastaran Mir Ali Asghar	Afghan Health and Development Service (AHDS)
Mohd. Fareed Asmand	Afghan Health and Development Services (AHDS)
Sayed Rahim Sattar	Afghan Public Welfare Organization (APWO)
Zakia Kakar	Afghan Women Educational Center (AWEC)
Humira Saqib	Afghan Women News Agency (AWNA)
Sajia Behgam Amin	Afghan Women Skills Development Center (AWSDC)
Hasina Safi	Afghan Women's Network (AWN)
Naqibullah Besmellah	Afghanistan in Social Society
Hakimi Mohammad Hassan	Afghanistan Youth National Development & Social Organization (AYNDSO)
Laila Mala Gul Agha	Afghans People Union (APU)
Abdullah Elham	Afghanistan Translation and Research Centre (ATRC) / CSCC (Civil Society Coordination Center)
Mohammad Naeem Ahmadzai	Awoshtoon Cultural Society Paktya (ACSP)
Ahmad Seyar Lalee	Civil Society and Human Rights Network (CSHRN)
Hayatullah Hayat	Civil Society Coordination Centre (CSCC)
Sayed Abdullah Ahmadi	Cooperation Center for Afghanistan (CCA)
Mardan Fazili	Cooperation Organization for Disabled and Poor People of Afghanistan (CODPPA)
Muhammad Younas Siddiqui	Development and Ability Organization (DAO)
Zahra Sepehr	Development and Support of Afghan Women and Children Organisation (DSAWCO)
Freshta Karimi	Da Qanoon Ghush-tonky
Khushhal Tasal	Eastern Region Civil Society Organizations Council (ERCSOC)
Arezo Qanih	Empowerment Centre for Women (ECW)
Mohammad Yonos Akhtar	Ertebat Organization
Liah Ghazanfar	Feminine Solidarity for Justice Organisation (FSJO)
M. Fahim M. Naim	Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan (FEFA)
Mina Khashei	Green Wish for Afghanistan Educational & Service Organization
Abdul Wadood Pedram	Human Rights and Eradication Violence Organization (HREVO)
Azaryuon Matin	Human Rights Focus Organisation (HRFO)
Parwin Hbibullah	Humanitarian Organization for Local Development (HOLD)

¹ Six of the above were unable to secure UK visas and therefore did not attend the Ayenda Conference.



Afghan delegates & international civil society in the Civil Society Workshop, 2nd December

Munera Yousufzada	Independent Directorate of Local Governance
Arizo Wagma	Khost Women Cultural and Social Society (KWCSS)
Azizullah Royesh	Marefat Civil Capacity Building Organization (MCCBO)
Hamidullah Zazai	Mediothek Afghanistan
Mohammad Rasool Shir Aqa	Mediothek Afghanistan, Baghlan
Homeira Qadari	Ministry of Social Affairs and university professor
Abdul Meejib Abdul Hamid	Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan
Najiba Sajjadi	Naji Development Welfare Organization (NDWO)
Moh-Noor Assadullah	Naway Sahar
Jamila Azizi	Organization for Harm Reduction in Afghanistan (OHRA)
Adela Mohseni	Open Society Foundation
Muslimah GhulamRabani	Peace Window for Women's Rehabilitation Organization of Afghanistan (PWWROA)
Frozan Mashal	Public Awareness Time Hour (PATH_O)
Sakhidad Naseri	Relief Organization Rehabilitation of Afghanistan (RORA)
Abdul Rashid Abdul Jalil	Reshad Organization and member of Eshanch Association
Amanullah Jawad	Rural Rehabilitation Association for Afghanistan (RRAA)
Baryalai Muhaiuddin Khan	Sabawoon Radio & Television
Raz Mohd. Dalili	Sanayee Development Organization (SDO)
Victoria Ghauri	Skills Training and Rehabilitation Society (STARS)
Najiba Ayubi	The Killid Group
Mohammad Naeem Ayubzada	Transparent Election Foundation of Afghanistan (TEFA)
Abdul Basir Asadullah	Urozgan Youth and Culture Society (UYCS)
Maria Raheen	Viyar Organisation
Fazel Rabi Haqbeen	WADAN
Salma Sahar Mohammad Yunus	Waqt-e-Far Cultural and Social Organization (WFCSO)
Mohammad Rahim Abdul Salam	Watch on Basic Rights Afghanistan Organizations (WBRAO)
Zarghona Roshan	Women & Society
Zarqa Yaftali Hakimi	Women and Children Legal Research Foundation (WCLRF)
Masihullah Akbari	Youth Coordination Center (YCC)
Abdul Mateen	Youth Unity Educational Cultural and Social Association (YUECSA)

Annex 4: Notes from Civil Society Peripheral Meetings during the London Conference on Afghanistan

4.1. Women's Rights Meeting with the UK Government's Secretary of State for International Development, 1st December 2014

Participants:

1. Justine Greening, Secretary of State for International Development
2. Hasina Safi, Director, Afghan Women's Network
3. Arezo Qanih, Deputy Director, Empowerment Centre for Women
4. Munera Yousufzada, Civil Society Engagement Adviser at Independent Directorate of Local Governance
5. Sajia Behgam, Programme Director, Afghan Women Skills Development Centre
6. Freshta Karimi, Founder & Director, Da Qanoon Ghush-tonky
7. Homeira Qaderi, University professor and staff member of the Ministry of Social Affairs
8. Hannah Bond, Director, Gender Action for Peace & Security UK (GAPS UK)
9. Jawed Nader, Director, BAAG

Agenda: women's priorities in Afghanistan today, violence against women and girls and the current temperature of the women's rights agenda in Afghanistan.

Women's Priorities in Afghanistan Today

It was agreed that implementation of current policy tools in Afghanistan is critical. This includes implementation of the law on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan and the National Action Plan for Women Peace and Security. This will, it was agreed, require enormous political will.

The participation of women in all walks of life is essential. This participation should, it was argued, not just be in the Ministry of Women's Affairs but more widely, including in the Supreme Court and Cabinet. Women need to be physically seen in positions of authority.

Participants were vehement that there must be no compromise of women's rights during the peace process. They also urged that women's economic rights and roles should be prioritised, especially in rural areas. There must be an end to women's economic marginalisation. This includes enabling

working women to maintain control over their own salaries (and not appropriated by male relatives).

Finally, the participants urged the international community to recognise and honour its advocacy role: 'You pay the Afghan Government's bills, you can ask them to work', commented Hasina Safi.

Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG)

The participants reminded the group that violence is not just physical, but also psychological, economic, social and cultural. It creeps into numerous areas of society. The example given was that poverty often leads families to remove their daughters from education to be forcefully married. If a girl objects, she can become the victim of domestic violence. In extreme cases, girls fleeing from domestic violence can be imprisoned for 'moral crimes'.

The participants believed that it is important to learn what has worked in VAWG projects and ensure those lessons inform other programmes to increase their impact. It was stated that more awareness of VAWG and women's rights is needed among the judicial sector, including how tackling these contributes to implementation of the EVAW law.

Success in tackling VAWG requires that such programmes work with men and boys to ensure they understand gender issues and their own rights. It was noted that raising awareness of legal rights and processes effectively has resulted in a spike in VAWG cases being reported.

Temperature of the Women's Rights Agenda

Whilst recognising the overall success of the recent elections, the participants commented that the National Unity Government is not an ideal solution, but rather a way to manage the political crisis. However, they noted the promising role that the Afghan First Lady is playing as a champion of women's rights and the number of meetings the President and CEO have held with women-focused civil society organisations. On a less positive note, wrangling over the formation of the cabinet has marginalised the women's agenda, and participants were concerned that the new President is not a firm advocate of the quota for women in politics. Another current concern raised was the delayed review of the family law by the Ministry of Justice which, as a priority, should be finalised and presented to the parliament.

The question was raised about the appropriate pace for women's rights reform in Afghanistan, given some Afghan politicians regularly cite that

theirs is a conservative society and such emphasis on rights will backfire. The participants believed that those politicians lack an inherent support for human rights. 'The UK should not worry [about the pace] and should push for the implementation of EVAW', commented Homeira Qaderi. They also warned that some particularly career-oriented female politicians will gamble with women's rights.

Secretary of State, Justine Greening, thanked the participants for their enlightening views and closed by stating "We'll continue advocating with you. You can rely on me and my Government to advocate for women's rights. There will be no meeting with the Prime Minister in which I won't raise this."

4.2. All Party Parliamentary Group Meeting on Aid Effectiveness & Women, Peace & Security in Afghanistan, 3rd December 2014

BAAG is the secretariat of the APPG on Afghanistan and arranges quarterly discussions for its members. Ahead of the London Conference, BAAG collaborated with the chair of the APPG on Women, Peace and Security to organise a joint event for both groups.

Speakers and themes

Hasina Safi, Director, Afghan Women's Network: How the international community can support the women's rights movements in Afghanistan.

Humaira Saqib, the Director of Afghan Women News Agency: Key recommendations from Afghan civil society to inform the London Conference.

Raz Mohd Dalili, Executive Director of Sanayee Development Organization: Afghan civil society perspectives on the role of donors and how aid can be most effective.

Sophia Willitts-King, Deputy Head of Conflict Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Office: UK Government political priorities at the London Conference.

Pauline Hayes, Director of Western Asia Division, DFID: UK Government development priorities at the London Conference.

Participants: In addition to the speakers, five members of the Houses of Commons and Lords attended the discussion, along with additional staff from DFID, the FCO and other interested parties.

Highlights of the discussion included Hasina Safi explaining the Afghan Women's Network's (AWN) sense of encouragement since the election. This includes, in particular, how moved and uplifted women activists were by President Ghani's praise of his wife during his inauguration speech. However, the AWN want to see action now rather than words. This should include the appointment of two female members to the supreme court and five female

members in his new cabinet. AWN's message to donors was to support the implementation of the 1325 National Action Plan (NAP), which brings together all the Government of Afghanistan's existing commitments including reducing violence against women and girls.

Speaking on economic growth, Hasina Safi said that women's economic empowerment is key. In line with AWN and the international community's request for women's financial inclusion, she noted that banks can do more to ensure women have access to credit. While women cannot solely own property, this should not, in and of itself, limit their ability to secure loans.

DFID indicated that, in line with their commitment to gender and women, peace and security in Afghanistan, they were working to ensure the London Conference communiqué would have a strong gender element.

Mr Dalili discussed the difficulties of funding for Afghan NGOs, criticising the large grants that national NGOs could neither compete for, nor manage. There are also problems caused by the lack of information available to ordinary Afghans on how development money is spent. He noted the best development initiatives were those that brought national and international NGOs, donors and government together, with a strong emphasis on consultation. He maintained that the government alone could not access all areas of the country, and criticised grants that went only to the government, or only to large contractors where much of the money returned to the country of origin.

4.3. Breakfast Roundtable with the UK Government's Secretary of State for International Development, the Chief Executive Officer of Afghanistan and Representatives of other Delegations, 4th December

The second day of the Ayenda Conference was a one-hour round-table to further discuss policy and advocacy priorities at the ministerial level. Co-hosted by Right Honourable Justine Greening MP and His Excellency Dr Abdullah Abdullah, it was attended by ten Afghan civil society delegates, four international NGO representatives, BAAG (British Afghan Agencies Group), ENNA (European Network of NGOs in Afghanistan) and the heads of delegation of various donor countries, plus a small group of British and international media.

The Secretary of State referred to the Ayenda conference as 'a fantastic event' and Dr Abdullah to the 'beating heart of hope you have'. Freshta Karimi and Barry Salaam raised issues that were important to Afghan civil society. This included their appreciation for Dr Abdullah's support and their willingness to work with the Government. It also included their concern for the lack of a specific law against torture and the rare prosecution of perpetrators; the need

Schedule for Breakfast Roundtable, 4th December 2014

0800 - 0805	Welcome remarks by Right Honourable Justine Greening MP, UK Secretary of State for International Development
0805 – 0810	His Excellency Dr Abdullah Abdullah, Chief Executive Officer of Afghanistan: Remarks on the engagement between civil society and the new Government for Afghanistan
0810– 0815	Ayenda Statement - Key Findings and Recommendations Afghan civil society delegates, Ms Freshta Karimi and Mr Barry Salaam
0815 -0820	Women and Girls' Empowerment, including reflections from the Oslo Symposium Ms Hasina Safi, Director, Afghan Women's Network and Ms Hannah Bond, Director of Gender Action for Peace and Security
0820 - 0855	Co-hosts provide initial responses to civil society's statements followed by reflections from international delegations, international NGOs and other observers
0855 - 0900	Closing remarks by co-hosts

to safeguard freedom of speech and the media, and to provide special facilities and education for the people with disabilities. They argued for the need to support civil society and give its members due respect for the expertise they have. Freshta Karimi commended DFID-funded Tawanmandi project and recommended that it should be expanded to more rural areas. Justine Greening presented her Government's vision of civil society as a bridge between the people and the government.

Hasina Safi, Director of AWN (Afghan Women's Network) and Hannah Bond, Director of GAPS UK (Gender Action for Peace & Security) presented reflections from the Oslo Symposium for Advancing Women's Rights and Empowerment in Afghanistan on November 23rd 2014. Ms Safi also referred to the positive nature of the Ayenda event. She requested no new initiatives from the Government but responses to the well-known lessons learned; that is, to ensure participation of women in decision-making, the implementation of UNSCR article 1325, core funding for civil society networks and protection for human rights defenders.

Dr Abdullah said budgeting was important and care for IDPs (internally displaced persons). He advised members of civil society to broaden their interaction with people, including those who have different views about their programmes and intentions, which have sometimes been problematic when perceived as foreign. Justine Greening recommended they never lose sight of the common ground and to make a distinction between advocacy and pushing too hard.

The EU/EC Representative expressed profound appreciation for both national and international civil society actors and their promotion of development under difficult circumstances. He gave assurances that they would forge the right balance between

programmes implemented by CSOs and building the capacity of the government to deliver them. The EU Representatives also reminded the audience that the EU will be conducting a consultation process with CSOs and other donors as they prepare the road map for EU engagement with civil society.

The final matter was raised by Aziz Rafiee, of the Afghan Civil Society Forum Organization (ACSFo), concerning the wording of the communiqué. His concern related to wording which might imply supporting a level of inappropriate control over civil society. He suggested including freedom of expression and the independence of civil society. Dr Abdullah suggested this was discussed with Mr Saiqal, his adviser, but cautioned that if the government is to be accountable and transparent it would be odd if civil society were not. Nevertheless, Dr Abdullah agreed that there would be no 'control' of civil society.

Annex 5: Speeches by the Civil Society Spokespeople at the Ayenda Conference

Barry Salaam

His Excellency Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Honorable Secretary of State Justin Greening, my role model in journalism Lyse Doucet, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

Let me start by congratulating the international community and our new government on the peaceful transition of power in Afghanistan. It was indeed a historic transition. But let us not forget that it was not a fully democratic one – due to highly disputed results of the elections.

What we expect from our leaders, today, is to respect the will of people who took to the polling stations to show that they wanted democracy, even at the expense of their lives. Democracy is the only means that unites Afghans and our nation today, and that is what defines our present day society. So, reforming democratic institutions and processes, especially the electoral bodies, should be one of the first priorities.

We welcome the bold steps the new government has taken to bring reforms. The momentum for change has been created. But we are equally concerned about the differences and conflict of interests between the two sides in the government. So we ask the two sides to reform their relations first before embarking on major reforms of the government. We were expecting a cabinet to be in place by now, which we haven't. I hope the delay pays off in some way and we get the best cabinet ever.

We have seen an excellent position paper from the government outlining all aspects of reform and good governance. Nothing is left unsaid or not promised. It is indeed more than civil society could have hoped. But we have a few additional recommendations to make those promises deliverable:

First, our politicians MUST stop supporting and protecting corrupt officials and violators of human rights, and women's rights. I can say with confidence that this not happening yet but we will wait.

Secondly, they should free our law-enforcing bodies and justice sector from political interferences. Justice should be served first to the justice sector itself.

Third, they must end favoritism and nepotism in public administration, and allow the highly educated young women and men, to lead the key government positions and play their role as the real force for change. The aim should be gender equality, reinforced by gender budgeting, in all

sectors at all levels

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Afghans believe that the signing of bilateral security agreement with US and NATO will bring them more security and stability. Taliban are mounting their terrorist attacks recently to prove that idea wrong. We call on international community to take substantial measures to reinforce our security forces, and to help contain violent attacks on civilians. Our security agreements should provide us more protection against cross-border infiltrations and interferences, being the main source of insecurity.

But let us also not forget that the key to stabilization is the economic growth of Afghanistan. Sustainable peace and security depends on tackling poverty and ending the social causes of insurgency and terrorism. We call on our international friends to increase their investments in civilian sector as they draw down their military presence. We need your assistance in building our infrastructure but also in unleashing our potential in mining and regional economic cooperation.

Please hold on to us as we start our real journey towards self-sustainability and we are sure, in the years to come, we will make a much better and stronger partner - one that the international friends can count on.

We - in the civil society - are committed to play our role as a watchdog and a driving force for positive changes. We will prepare the ground for national dialogue on issues of national importance hopefully bridging political and social differences and gaps that undermine reform. We will also work on our own sustainability to depend less on foreign aid in the years to come.

And let me end by giving you a good news that: a new generation of civil society activists working entirely on voluntary basis is already emerging, and they will be working tirelessly for bringing more positive changes in Afghanistan.

Freshta Karimi

Secretary of State – Chief Executive Officer for Afghanistan – Your Excellencies – Ladies and Gentleman

I am very pleased to have this opportunity to talk to you on behalf of Afghan Civil Society.

In the past decade, significant progress has been made in Afghanistan in terms of women's rights, service delivery and civil society development. Legislative support for women's rights has been

one of the biggest achievements for example through the Afghanistan constitution and the ERAW law. The number of girl students in both school and university has been greatly increased. The participation of professional women is also growing with the help of the quota system for 27% of women in Afghanistan parliament, a significant increase in the number of women judges, prosecutor and lawyers. Access to justice has been made easier for everyone, but particularly for women in comparison with 2001. Afghan Civil Society has played a very active role during the past decade, in all sectors, and a lot of improvements have been made by qualified men and women working within the Civil Society organizations and providing their professional services to the citizens of Afghanistan. Both the Afghan government and civil society have worked day and night to provide basic services to the citizens of Afghanistan - a lot has been improved especially in health and education.

However Excellencies,

Despite major improvements and achievements, women are still suffering from a variety of barriers and violations. Women's access to justice at the sub-national level is still a big issue, women are not independent economically, and many do not have access to their property or are not allowed control over their own money. People still do not have access to basic service in rural areas and they are still struggling to access basic healthcare. Although civil society has been working hard for the development of the country, its role is not very well recognized.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Afghanistan has gone through 30 years of war and is still struggling with insecurity. We need commitment from the Afghan Government to implement the reforms it has promised and long-term support from the international community in turn to support both the Afghan government and civil society with:

- Support to women headed organizations to promote women's rights.
- Help to increase the number of women in positions of authority and leadership.
- The passing of the Comprehensive Children's Act, the enforcement of the ERAW law, the expansion of the special prosecutors units under the Attorney General's office, to all provinces and the establishment of especial ERAW law courts.
- The development of sustainable financial mechanisms for Afghan funded and run service delivery in the long term but no cuts in donor funding for health care and education in the meantime.

- The role of civil society in ensuring freedom of information, in advising and lobbying the government and international community on policy development, and in understanding the consequences of legislation, should be recognized, sought and respected.



Barry Salaam delivers the Civil Society statement at the Ayenda Conference

Annex 6: The London Conference on Afghanistan Communiqué

The London Conference on Afghanistan took place on 4 December 2014, co-hosted by the governments of the UK and Afghanistan. This communiqué was issued at the end of the conference:

The London Conference on Afghanistan 4 December 2014

Afghanistan and International Community: Commitments to Reforms and Renewed Partnership

1. We, the National Unity Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (hereafter called the Afghan Government) and the International Community along with other partners, met on 4 December 2014 in London to reaffirm and consolidate our partnership as we begin the Transformation Decade (2015 to 2024). We renewed our commitment to the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF) set out at the Tokyo Conference in 2012, and reached consensus on a process to refresh the TMAF at next year's Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) based in particular on the reform programme and priorities of the new Afghan Government.
2. The international participants congratulated Afghanistan on peacefully completing the first ever, democratic transfer of power in the country's history, culminating in the formation of the new Government. The London Conference was the first opportunity for the new Afghan Government, the International Community, and wider stakeholders, to set out on the world stage our collective commitments to Afghanistan's future after the 2014 drawdown of the International Security Assistance Force as we jointly proceed into the Transformation Decade.
3. Participants confirmed that the Afghan Government reform programme, entitled "Realizing Self-Reliance: Commitments to Reforms and Renewed Partnership" provides a credible framework for improving security, political stability, economic and fiscal stabilisation, advancing good governance, including electoral reform and strengthening democratic institutions, promoting the rule of law, and respect for human rights, particularly in relation to women and girls, fighting corruption and the illicit economy including narcotics, and paving the way for enhanced private sector investments and sustainable social, environmental and economic development.
4. The Participants welcomed the Afghan Government's plans to enhance productivity, increase its domestic revenue mobilisation, to attract more private sector investment, and stimulate growth and employment opportunities. Over time this approach will reduce Afghanistan's dependence on external support. However, Participants recognised that this is a long term endeavour and that the Afghan Government will continue to have significant economic requirements that cannot be met solely by domestic revenues. To help ensure that Afghanistan remains on a path towards a more sustainable future for all Afghans, the International Community reaffirmed its Tokyo commitment of providing sixteen billion US dollars through 2015, and sustaining support, through 2017, at or near the levels of the past decade. Going forward, the International Community reiterated its commitment, as set out in the Tokyo Declaration, to direct significant and continuing but declining financial support towards Afghanistan's social and economic development priorities through the Transformation Decade. Further, the International Community reaffirmed that its ability to sustain support for Afghanistan depends upon the principle of mutual accountability and the Afghan Government delivering on its commitments under the TMAF process.
5. The London Conference was co-chaired by H.E. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Rt Hon David Cameron MP, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The event was opened by H.E. Abdullah Abdullah, Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom.

Section 2: Context

6. The London Conference, together with the NATO Wales Summit in September 2014, has solidified a strong foundation to support Afghanistan throughout the Transformation Decade. The Participants noted the outcomes from the Wales NATO Summit and the steps taken by the Afghan Government to ensure the continued security of their country, including through the ratification of the Bilateral Security Agreement with the United States of America and the Status of Forces Agreement with NATO on 30 November 2014 in Kabul. These agreements respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty among all the states of the region. This Conference has built on the outcomes of previous conferences, in which the Afghan Government and the International

Community mutually renewed their long-term commitments in the areas of governance, security, the peace process, economic and social development, human rights in particular women and children's full enjoyment of these rights, and regional cooperation.

7. Participants noted that from an extremely challenging starting point as one of the least developed countries in the world, Afghanistan has made significant progress over the past thirteen years, in security, elections and many fields of development, including education, health, roads, civil aviation, agriculture, and ICT, as indicated in "Realizing Self-Reliance". This has all been made possible as a result of an unprecedented level of international support and the commitment and sacrifice of both Afghan and international forces as well as other men and women including civilian and development personnel.
8. The Participants noted that security is a prerequisite for Afghanistan's continued development. The Participants reaffirmed the importance of the peace process to ending violence and sustaining development in Afghanistan. The Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process towards reconciliation and peace must be transparent and inclusive, representing the legitimate interests of all Afghans, including women. In this context, the Participants reiterated the importance of the peace process principles as per the UN Security Council Resolutions, such as the renunciation of violence, the breaking of ties to international terrorism and respect for the Afghan Constitution, including its human rights provisions, notably the rights of all Afghans, particularly women, and emphasised the region's cooperation and respect for the peace process and its outcome as demonstrated at the October 2014 Beijing Conference Declaration.
9. President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah met on 2 December 2014 at NATO Headquarters with Foreign Ministers from the 42 NATO Allies and Partner nations participating in the Resolute Support Mission. At the meeting, they agreed to launch the Resolute Support Mission on 1 January 2015 opening a new chapter in the Alliance's relationship with Afghanistan.
10. The Participants recognised that the issue of Afghan refugees impacts on the economic development of regional countries. We commend regional countries, in particular Pakistan and Iran, for their efforts in hosting millions of Afghans, in the spirit of good neighbourly relations, over the past several

decades. In this regard, we call on the International Community to provide further support and assistance to enable their voluntary repatriation and resettlement in Afghanistan in a safe, timely and dignified manner. Furthermore, efforts are required to address the issue of irregular migration.

11. Participants recognised that, despite achievements, Afghanistan faces formidable challenges. Meeting them requires long-term commitments and sustained realistic strategies to root out corruption, combat terrorism and strengthen good governance and rule of law, build the foundations for sustainable and inclusive productivity and growth, enhance regional dialogue and cooperation, progress in social development including health, sanitation and education, particularly in rural areas, and strengthening human rights and gender mainstreaming. The Participants emphasised the need for a broad approach to tackling the illicit drug business, involving production, trafficking, demand and financial flows arising from the illicit economy, including providing incentives for legal economic activity.
12. The International Community reiterated its support to the Afghan Government's efforts to achieve self-reliance. The Participants strongly welcomed the new Afghan Government's early action to address economic and fiscal challenges, including measures to increase sustainable productivity, strengthen revenue collection and the banking sector, prioritise expenditure and improve the private investment climate.
13. The Participants appreciated the positive steps being taken by the new Afghan Government. In particular, the decisive actions on the Kabul Bank as an important immediate step on corruption and efforts to improve relationships in the region were strongly welcomed. Participants also acknowledged the significant positive steps being taken to continue the professionalisation of state institutions, and increase trade and diplomatic interactions with countries in the region.

Section 3: The Reform Agenda

14. The Afghan Government presented a reform strategy built around regional connectivity, good governance, and investments in productivity. Central to this strategy is economic cooperation between Afghanistan and the region through transit trade, energy and investments that will contribute directly to prosperity and stability into the region and beyond. Participants noted Afghanistan's rapid progress on advancing regional connectivity through mechanisms

such as CAREC, SAARC, RECCA, ECO, SCO and projects like CASA 1000, TAPI, and TUTAP, the economic confidence building measures of the 'Heart of Asia' Istanbul Process, and the development of the Lapis Lazuli Corridor and Charbahar port. The Participants highlighted the importance of regional cooperation for disaster management and risk reduction efforts in Afghanistan.

15. The Afghan Government's domestic reform programme for effective governance includes short, medium, and long-term measures that are intended to provide a sound management framework for aligning expenditures with income, safeguarding Central Bank independence, more transparent and effective governance at all levels (including improving the framework for sub-national governance with more budget authority), streamlining and consolidating the national priority programmes, including new programming, promoting private sector development, supporting women and youth to become productive partners in economic growth, timely reforms to the electoral system, and actions to curb the illicit economy.

16. The Government of Afghanistan set out its commitment to deliver the following critical reforms ahead of the Senior Officials Meeting in 2015: ensuring that a credible budget is passed; scrutinising expenditure and implementing measures to increase revenue including measures to broaden the tax base; strengthening financial sector supervision; specific reforms to improve the conditions for responsible private sector investment; demonstrated actions to improve human rights, particularly the rights of women, including implementation of the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan and the Afghan National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security.

17. The Participants recognised the importance of ensuring the credibility of future elections to strengthening Afghan democracy. The Participants welcomed the Government's commitment to establishing a special commission for the reform of the electoral system and to implementing meaningful electoral reform in the near future.

18. The Participants acknowledged the critical role that the private sector will play in Afghanistan's path to sustainability, and noted the Afghan Government's commitment to improving the Doing Business Indicators, and its commitment to prioritise a stronger, more consistent regulatory framework enabling a stronger and more competitive business environment, as well as investment in infrastructure, agriculture

and the extractive industries to help encourage private sector investment and more sustainable economic growth. This commitment includes putting in place the strongest possible available measures, based on international best practice, to counter the threat of conflict and corruption around the extractive industries. The Government of Afghanistan also committed to take specific action to increase levels of domestic and foreign private sector investment in Afghanistan to help create and sustain decent jobs, including for women and youth, and improve access to services and markets. Making progress on an inclusive peace and reconciliation process is critical to pave the way for a conducive environment for future investments in Afghanistan.

19. Poverty reduction and job creation remain major issues in Afghanistan. The Participants shared the Government's concerns and welcomed its initiatives for fostering economic inclusion (with more focus particularly on the agriculture sector as the largest source of job creation and poverty reduction), including provision of adequate domestic and regional infrastructure, and building a citizens charter of fundamental economic rights that will be provided to deprived and vulnerable people across the country.

20. The Participants recognised the central role of women and youth in Afghanistan throughout the Transformation Decade, including in political decision making processes, government, the economy, access to health and education, the security and justice sector, and peace and reconciliation efforts. The International Community welcomed the Afghan Government's commitment to protecting the rights of and expanding the opportunities for women, and highlighted its steadfast commitment to support and empower Afghan women and girls. The Participants also welcomed the Afghan Government's commitment to maintain the integrity of and strengthen implementation of the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) law. The Participants noted the statement from the Symposium in Oslo on Advancing Women's Rights and Empowerment in Afghanistan on 23 November.

Section 4: The Development Partnership

21. The Afghan Government confirmed its resolve, as expressed at Bonn 2011, that the future of its political system will remain firmly founded in the Afghan Constitution. The Afghan people will continue to build a stable, democratic society, based on the rule of law, an effective and independent judiciary, good governance, respect for the rights

of all citizens, especially women and girls, and progress in the fight against corruption.

22. The Participants reaffirmed their commitment to aid effectiveness principles, including those set out in the TMAF. They recognised that aid should focus on building Afghan capabilities and on enabling connectivity and increased market access, as well as act as a facilitator for triggering inclusive economic growth. It should enable the Afghan state to play its role as a public service provider, strengthening good governance and promoting rule of law, and ensuring human rights equally for all citizens.
23. The Participants re-affirmed their commitment to aligning with Afghan national priorities, to further improve aid information management, and to take concrete steps towards delivering more aid on budget in tandem with improvements to Afghan budget and expenditure systems. Technical assistance will be demand-driven and focused on strengthening Afghan Government structures at national and sub-national levels.
24. The Participants recognised the important role Afghan civil society has played in Afghanistan's development. The Participants welcomed the Afghan Government's commitment to the constructive, on-going dialogue with civil society, including Afghan women's organisations, to ensure Afghan civil society's full and meaningful involvement in key political processes, strengthening governance and the rule of law, as well as the development, oversight and monitoring of the refreshed TMAF. The Participants also noted the importance of protecting and strengthening free media. The Participants acknowledged the Afghan civil society statement at the Conference and welcomed the outcomes and conclusions of the Afghan civil society-led "Ayenda" associated event on 3 and 4 December. The Participants also noted the role that international NGOs play in development in Afghanistan as well supporting Afghan Civil Society and recognised as important their traditional role in humanitarian assistance in the future.
25. Sustained engagement of Afghanistan's regional partners and supporters is key to addressing common challenges. The Participants recognised the importance of the Afghan-led and regionally owned Heart of Asia Istanbul Process, and welcomed the outcomes of the 4th Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference's Beijing Declaration in October 2014 and Pakistan hosting the 5th Ministerial Conference in 2015. The Participants highlighted the importance of collaboration and coordination between the Afghan-led Istanbul and RECCA processes and

all regional organisations and programmes, and committed to work together and with other Governments in the region towards effective trade and transit agreements, streamlined border procedures and customs harmonisation, required transport infrastructure for critical interconnectivity and an effective regional energy network in Central and South Asia.

26. Participants also noted the important and continuing coordination and assistance role of the UN in supporting the new Government. They recognised that the UN mandate renewal scheduled for March 2015 would be an opportunity to acknowledge the need for one UN system as agreed in the Kabul Conference. The Participants welcomed the adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2145 (2014) extending the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and look forward to the Security Council's renewal of the mandate in March 2015.

Section 5: The Way Forward

27. The Participants look forward to the Senior Officials Meeting in mid 2015 in Kabul where partners will refresh the TMAF that defines joint objectives for the Transformation Decade, and to the next Ministerial Meeting in 2016.
28. The Afghan Government expressed its appreciation to the UK Government for hosting the London Conference and the Participants for their continued and unprecedented support for the security and development of Afghanistan.

The co-organisers and donors

About ACBAR (www.acbar.org)

ACBAR, the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief & Development, is an independent, Afghan body bringing together 128 national and international NGOs working in Afghanistan and abiding by the humanitarian principles of independence, neutrality, impartiality and humanity. As the collective voice of NGOs operating in Afghanistan, ACBAR's activities have focused heavily on providing information to its members and the wider aid community, coordinating activities at the national and regional levels, and advocating on issues affecting the work of its members.

About Counterpart International (www.counterpart.org/our-work/geographies/afghanistan)

Counterpart International is a global, development non-governmental organisation that empowers people and communities to implement innovative and enduring solutions to social, economic and environmental challenges. Counterpart has been forging partnerships with communities in need for nearly 50 years. Counterpart International runs the Afghan Civic Engagement Program (ACEP) in partnership with the Internews Network, the Aga Khan Foundation, and the International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL). A five-year programme funded by USAID, the goal of ACEP is to promote civil society and media engagement that enables Afghan citizens to influence policy, monitor government accountability and serve as an advocate for political reform.

About CS-JWG

The Civil Society Joint Working Group (CS-JWG) is composed of around 30 coordinating bodies representing approximately 1,400 civil society organisations of all sizes. The CS-JWG is an Afghan-led network that embraces the diversity of Afghan civil society. Its members include non-government organisations, civil society organisations, social organisations, unions, associations and other registered entities working on a broad range of issues throughout the 34 provinces of Afghanistan. The CS-JWG has been mandated to mobilise Afghan civil society around key international community events with the Afghan Government for many years. These events have included the Bonn II and Tokyo inter-ministerial development conferences, the Senior Officials' Meeting in July 2013 and the Special Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB) meeting in 2014.

About DFID (<https://www.gov.uk/government/world/afghanistan>)

The Department for International Development (DFID) leads the UK's work to end extreme poverty. DFID is ending the need for aid by creating jobs, unlocking the potential of girls and women and helping to save lives when humanitarian emergencies hit.

Specific to Afghanistan, DFID's vision is a more peaceful, stable, viable and prosperous Afghanistan. This is a long-term agenda that will require DFID's ongoing presence well beyond 2015. To help the Afghan government make clear and irreversible path towards a more peaceful, stable, viable and prosperous Afghanistan, DFID focuses on three critical areas: Supporting peace, security and political stability; promoting economic stability, growth and jobs and helping the state to deliver improved services. DFID's work supports Afghan Women's empowerment.

DFID's programme supports the Afghan government's National Development Strategy. DFID are committed to channelling at least half their annual programme through Afghan government systems primarily via the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), based on sound economic management and strong fiduciary safeguards. This approach will help to deliver value for money and build Afghanistan's capacity to manage its own affairs.

About the EU (www.eeas.europa.eu/afghanistan)

The European Union gives value to a dynamic, pluralistic and competent civil society – a crucial component of any democratic system – and recognises the importance of constructive relations between states and Civil Society Organizations. CSOs are important actors in governance and accountability, partners in fostering social development and key stakeholders in promoting inclusive and sustainable growth. In Afghanistan, since 2002, civil society organisations have been essential partners in the implementation of EU assistance, e.g. in health, social protection, agriculture, refugees. In addition to the sectorial programmes, EU support to civil society includes specific funding to improve their capacity in the field of human rights and democratic governance. Since 2003, the EU has provided EUR 552 million in the form of action grants to non-state actors operating in Afghanistan. The EU currently supports 82 projects run by Afghan and international civil society organisations for a total amount of around 110 million EUR.

**About UNAMA and the UNAMA-established
CSSG**
(<http://www.unama.unmissions.org>)

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is a political mission established at the request of the Government to assist it and the people of Afghanistan in laying the foundations for sustainable peace and development. UNAMA has played an effective supporting role in paving the way for the engagement of civil society in the national development agenda. This includes setting up the Civil Society Support Group (CSSG) in 2010 to ensure coherent donor support for Afghan civil society. Through the CSSG, comprised of technical staff from the lead donors, UNAMA facilitates regular civil society-international community discussions for coherent donor support of Afghan civil society, such as those held in preparation for the Tokyo 2012 Conference, the Senior Officials' Meeting in 2013, the Special Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board Meeting and the London Conference, both in 2014. In addition, UNAMA facilitates information sharing and cooperation between the Afghan Ministry of Finance and Afghan civil society on national development dialogue.



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