



# Security Council

Seventieth year

## 7591<sup>st</sup> meeting

Monday, 21 December 2015, 10.10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*


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*President:* Ms. Power/Ms. Sison . . . . . (United States of America)

*Members:*

Angola . . . . .	Mr. Lucas
Chad . . . . .	Mr. Mahamat Zene
Chile . . . . .	Mr. Barros Melet
China . . . . .	Mr. Wang Min
France . . . . .	Mr. Bertoux
Jordan . . . . .	Mr. Hmoud
Lithuania . . . . .	Mr. Baublys
Malaysia . . . . .	Mr. Ibrahim
New Zealand . . . . .	Mr. Van Bohemen
Nigeria . . . . .	Mr. Laro
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Safronkov
Spain . . . . .	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Rycroft
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) . . . . .	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

## Agenda

### The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2015/942)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation in Afghanistan**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2015/942)**

**The President:** In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Sweden and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Ioannis Vrailas, Chargé d'Affaires of the delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/942, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

I now give the floor to Mr. Haysom.

**Mr. Haysom:** I would like to describe briefly the situation in which Afghanistan finds itself at the end of the first year of its transformation decade, and to frame the challenges it faces in 2016.

The international civilian and military withdrawal at the end of 2014 coincided with a political transition and confronted Afghanistan with a triple set of challenges — economic, security and political. The National Unity Government, itself a product of political crisis, inherited a weakening economy, an empty treasury and a war that it needed to fight with decreasing levels of international military assistance. None of those circumstances were of its own making. Indeed, a difficult year was expected. As President

Ghani himself put it 12 days ago at the ministerial meeting in Islamabad, Afghanistan would be fighting for its survival in 2015.

On the economic front, the fiscal gap between the revenue raised and spent by the Government would remain of concern. Poverty is no less prevalent, and the economic contraction has led to high unemployment and its attendant frustration, particularly among youth. Corruption has yet to be overcome.

On the security front, there was overall deterioration as the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) grappled with an intensified conflict, but with much reduced international military support. Civilians, as ever, continue to bear the brunt of the conflict, as casualties rise at an ever increasing rate and more people have been displaced from their homes by the conflict.

On the political front, the National Unity Government has at times struggled to project the necessary national unity and has seen the level of its public support diminish markedly. An increasingly vocal political opposition has emerged, drawing on the anxiety generated by the perceived security deterioration and economic contraction. As a consequence of this situation, many Afghans are anxious about the future. Some evidently feel that they have no choice other than to leave the country in search of economic and security opportunities elsewhere.

While we must acknowledge those realities, we also must take note of the many significant steps being taken to keep Afghanistan on the path to stability and greater self-reliance. While the challenges are of such a scale and complexity that any Government would be tested in its efforts to meet them head-on, there has been progress nonetheless.

On the political front, the National Unity Government has held together and is advancing its agenda, including that of implementing the terms of the September 2014 political agreement, as well as attempting to professionalize the civil service. An example of progress would be the submission today of the second and final set of recommendations of the Special Electoral Reform Commission. I look forward to the finalization of that process, which will allow for an electoral calendar to be set and will mark another step towards restoring public confidence in the electoral institutions and the democratic process.

The United Nations maintains its view that there is no viable alternative to the National Unity Government, a point that, encouragingly, much of the Afghan political opposition also appears to recognize, as evidenced at the gathering of political critics that took place in Kabul just three days ago. We encourage a continued dialogue and outreach — within Government and outside — to ensure a greater unity of purpose, notably from the political elite, which is necessary for public confidence, governance reforms and military morale.

On the economic front, the Government is pressing forward with its reform agenda, as articulated in the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework and its thoughtful implementation plan. Economic growth, although low, is actually projected to increase in the next years. When it took office in 2014, the Government faced a significant year-end financial fiscal gap. In 2015, domestic revenues have increased and the Government is confident that it has averted a second fiscal crisis, albeit that this was managed primarily by failing to expend budgeted funds for development.

I commend the Government for continuing to put into place the building blocks for long-term economic improvement, including through an increased commitment to promoting regional economic integration. On that note, we welcome the recommitment by the members of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process to shared objectives at the recent ministerial-level meeting in Islamabad. I would also like to draw attention to the ground-breaking ceremony, held just last week in Ashgabat, for the launch of the Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India natural gas pipeline, which will supply energy-hungry Afghanistan, Pakistan and India with natural gas from Turkmenistan. That is a noteworthy development, showing as it does just what can be achieved when Afghanistan and its neighbours work in partnership.

On the security front, the ANSF have shown resilience in the face of an intensified insurgency. Certainly, the temporary loss of key district centres and the provincial centre of Kunduz city were worrying developments and revealed major ANSF shortcomings. However, almost all of the district centres have been retaken, as has Kunduz city. The ANSF may be stretched to capacity but, for the most part, they are holding their ground. That does not ignore the need for improvements to ANSF functioning, with a particular focus on logistics and administration, and remedial

measures to boost both morale and diminish rates of attrition, as well as continued international support for its attempts to build its own air support capabilities.

Afghanistan, as a sovereign nation confronting countless challenges, has made it through its first post-transition year, an achievement in itself. But in 2016, it is vital that the National Unity Government demonstrates increasingly its effectiveness, not only to the Afghan people but also to donors, on whom it is largely dependent for financial, material and technical assistance.

In 2016, the international community will make critical decisions on the level and type of assistance that it will continue to offer. In Warsaw, NATO countries will pledge their further military commitment for four years, while in Brussels the donor community will pledge its renewed civilian assistance. The international community, although committed to supporting Afghanistan, must make difficult choices as events elsewhere in the world compete for international attention and limited resources. For that reason, they will need to be assured not only that their assistance meets evident needs, but that it will have a tangible impact. In particular, Afghanistan must show that it is committed to tackling corruption, making the necessary governance reforms and generating hope for the future, which will decrease the rate of emigration. UNAMA will be encouraging donors to invest in Afghanistan's reconstruction and security, rather than facing the costs of integrating immigrants

In the long term, the single development that would allow for material progress towards a stable and self-reliant Afghanistan would be an agreement among Afghans as to the arrangements by which they can live together in peace and harmony. Beyond the immediate suffering being inflicted upon the Afghan people, the war is impeding efforts to bring the political and economic progress that ultimately will ensure stability. Substantial human and material resources are being blocked or diverted on account of the insecurity. This situation cannot continue indefinitely; sooner or later the financial resources currently available to the country will decrease. Afghanistan needs to find a political route to peace.

After some promising developments earlier this year, most notably with the July talks in Murree, peace efforts reached an impasse as the Taliban leadership appeared to fragment and strains reappeared in

Afghanistan/Pakistan relations. The events in Kunduz also caused some to question whether the time was ripe for peace talks. This loss of momentum was disappointing, but peace processes rarely move forward in a linear fashion. We welcome the reiteration, made on 9 December in Islamabad, by the Afghan Government of its commitment to a peace process. I call upon the Taliban, which has not yet committed to entering into a peace process, to reciprocate the Government's commitment by stepping forward to directly engage with the Government. There is no other way for insurgent groups to demonstrate a commitment to the welfare and prosperity of their fellow citizens than to search for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The reliance on violent conflict to achieve political ends places a question mark over their intentions.

In 2016, UNAMA will continue to support the Afghan Government and people in laying the foundations for peace. As part of its broader efforts, UNAMA will continue to pursue its three track approach to engagement with the Taliban on human rights, humanitarian access and political engagement.

On human rights, we will engage with the Taliban, as with the Government, on the issue of protection of civilians and on women's and children's rights. We will continue to promote respect for and adherence to international human rights and humanitarian law.

On humanitarian affairs, United Nations humanitarian agencies will engage with the Taliban, again as with the Government, to promote humanitarian access to health care for those in need, wherever they are in Afghanistan, while ensuring protection for those who deliver such aid, especially in regard to polio immunization.

On political issues, we will continue to meet with the Taliban, with the knowledge and support of the Government, to explore possible entry points to a peace process and ways to conceptualize and promote the best format for talks to build trust and confidence in a proper political engagement. During 2015, we have floated several such proposals for talks and other initiatives, which, unfortunately, failed to find traction.

We stand by our call for a track-I dialogue — namely, direct, face to face negotiations between representatives of the Government and the Taliban leadership. We are encouraged specifically by the offers made by Pakistan, the United States and China on 9 December to support such a process. UNAMA supports all efforts

to establish a peace process. We continue to offer our good offices in any facilitative role, while recognizing that any peace process must be Afghan-owned and led.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Haysom for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan

**Mr. Saikal** (Afghanistan): I would like to thank the United States for its leadership of the Council this month and for organizing this very important debate. I take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his recent report on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2015/942). I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and his team for their tireless efforts and hard work in Afghanistan, a reflection of which can be seen in the Secretary-General's report.

We recognize the importance of General Assembly resolution 68/11 and Security Council resolution 2210 (2015) requesting the Secretary-General to report on the situation in Afghanistan every three months. These reports, which generally align with our insights on the realities in Afghanistan, provide a comprehensive account of daily developments in the country, covering a wide range of issues. The Security Council's quarterly deliberations on Afghanistan ensure that Member States remain informed about the evolving security and socio-political dynamics in Afghanistan. It is also helpful for the National Unity Government of Afghanistan in its working relationship with the international community. In addition to providing an immense wealth of information, the Secretary-General's quarterly reports identify problem areas relevant to the Security Council's mandate. We hope the Council will take these debates a step forward and deliver relevant required actions for the problems raised.

As we deliberate here today, the first post-transition year of Afghanistan is coming to an end. Despite some skepticism fuelled by extensive terrorist attacks this year and our high casualty rates, Afghanistan remains united and its national resolve against terrorism and violent extremism is stronger than ever before. The National Unity Government has become an enduring phenomenon, spreading its wings over the governance of the country and aiming to be more inclusive through its outreach policies. We are continuing our key goal of improving security through the overarching two-track

policy of pursuing the peace process through regional and international efforts and increasing Afghanistan's defensive capacity through national reform and the NATO Resolute Support Mission, in order to protect our people and keep the region and the world safe. Afghanistan is greatly appreciative of the continued support that the international community has provided for our ongoing transition towards a stable, secure and prosperous nation.

Throughout the year, the National Unity Government has continued its efforts to build trust, improve bilateral ties and engage with the countries of the region to foster effective partnership. It has invested considerable political capital in the peace process. On 9 December, through the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process Ministerial Conference in Islamabad and the adoption of General Assembly resolution 70/77, entitled "The situation in Afghanistan", the region and the world at large acknowledged that Afghanistan has been fighting regional and international terrorist groups. They recognized that a peace process backed by regional actors, in particular Pakistan, and supported by the international community is essential for achieving long-term peace and stability in Afghanistan.

The participants in the Islamabad Conference recognized that achieving peace and security is a shared responsibility in which each regional country must play its role. They agreed to put into practice specific measures necessary for countering and eliminating the menace of terrorism, curbing the spread of violent extremism and the promotion of violence as a means of achieving political objectives. They further agreed to take action to deny terrorists' access to financial and material resources, to dismantle their sanctuaries and training facilities, to curtail their ability to recruit and train, and to curb their movements. They urged all Afghan Taliban groups and all other armed opposition groups to enter into peace talks with the Afghan Government. They also resolved to begin the process of identifying and countering the threats associated with terrorism, transnational criminal narcotics and weapon smuggling networks. The Conference decided to explore a collective security approach by adopting a common counter-terrorism strategy. It tasked the relevant Heart of Asia senior officials to meet in the first half of 2016 and come up with measures on security issues and counter-terrorism.

Along the margins of the Conference, during bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral meetings held

between the Afghan President, the Pakistani Prime Minister, the Chinese Foreign Minister, and the United States Deputy Secretary of State, the parties stressed the need to enhance mutual trust and cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan. It was made clear that friendly, mutually respectful relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan are necessary if an enabling environment for the peace process is to be created and if the security, stability, prosperity and national interest of both States are to be ensured. We once again heard and welcome the Pakistan leadership's statements that Pakistan will play a genuine and constructive role in supporting security and facilitating peace talks with the Taliban. President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai hoped that the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, in association with regional and international security organizations, could reach an agreement on a verification mechanism to determine what type of actors threaten our common interest and how to deal with them in an effective manner.

Talking to the Taliban is not new. We have been talking to them since they appeared on our country's political landscape in 1994. We have experienced their seasonal and tactical use of war and peace. The latest potential diplomatic breakthrough in putting the peace process back on track and opening an effective and sustainable regional and global approach is a sign of hope, but it can only become meaningful if words are translated into deeds. This is the moment of truth — we must see a genuine paradigm shift on the part of the regional orchestrators of our insecurity. The recent attacks in Kandahar and Helmand provinces have shown that better relations with neighbours can only be possible when foreign-based sanctuaries are dismantled and violence is reduced within Afghanistan and across the region.

Foreign planning, logistical support, safe havens, an abundance of cash, deadly weapons and suicide bombers are key enablers of terrorism and violent extremism. The motivation for this level of support for terror within State circles, in violation of resolution 1373 (2001), must be questioned, identified and addressed. In Afghanistan's region, apart from other root causes of terrorism, States' trust deficit, negative rivalry, fuming hate and excessive obsession and suspicion are causes for serious concern. Furthermore, tension between military and civilian control in domestic politics have instigated policies that use violence to achieve political objectives. This has turned our country into a theatre for a proxy war for others and has provided a comfort zone within

which terrorists and violent extremist groups operate at national, regional and international levels. Targeting the promoters and drivers of such policies within State structures through specific reform programmes, especially in the security apparatus, together with travel and financial sanctions, would certainly make the world safer. We also hope the update and expansion of sanction regimes through resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1988 (2011) will further tighten the noose on the activities of Al-Qaida, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) and the Taliban.

The incursions of different kinds across the Durand Line, in clear violation of paragraph 4 of Article of the United Nations Charter and resolution 2131 (2013), continued throughout 2015. The flow of militant infiltrations and large-scale weapon smuggling in our region, providing manpower, firearms and ammunitions to the terrorist networks, must be disrupted. Deriding Afghanistan for its genuine concern over violations of United Nations Charter and resolutions is not helpful for any healthy dialogue. We expect better treatment for our concerns than routinely branding them “rhetoric from Kabul” or “resorting to the blame game”.

The rapid growth of ISIS in the eastern and other parts of Afghanistan should be a serious concern for all of us. Some sections of the Taliban have sworn allegiance to ISIS. The recent inhumane attacks in California, Paris, Beirut and Nairobi, and the bombing of the Russian airliner, have demonstrated how through a new brand of terrorism a leading global non-State terrorist actor has emerged and can no longer be confined to the Middle East or our region. We need a unified response to strengthen global collaboration and develop strategies to denounce the extremist ideology of ISIS and their ilk and combat terrorism in all its forms.

Despite continuing challenges, 15 years of collaborative work and joint sacrifices by Afghanistan and the international community have had significant gains of which we should all be proud. Given the emerging challenges, today we fight the world’s war against international terrorism and violent extremism, with an average of 30 to 40 civilian casualties a day. The consolidation and sustainability of our gains are absolutely vital. The cost of an insecure Afghanistan and its consequences is far greater than that of a secure Afghanistan. Handling the fresh flow of Afghan refugees in Europe is a reminder of that. Removing the drivers of threats and making Afghanistan capable of

defending itself and its citizens is in fact an investment in the safety of the world. The Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) need sustainability and the right enablers to face the war that has been imposed on us. We welcome the 1 December NATO decision to extend its training mission in Afghanistan during 2016 and secure funding for ANDSF until the end of 2020. We also look forward to the 2016 Warsaw NATO Summit’s deliberations on Afghanistan.

Beside the security challenges, the National Unity Government of Afghanistan has remained focused on economic issues, in particular addressing the fiscal gap, poverty, unemployment and delivery of basic services through a series of initiatives within the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework and in line with 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1). Our efforts in the promotion and advancement of regional economic cooperation within the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan Process have already yielded results. The recent start of construction of the Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India gas pipeline, our accession to the World Trade Organization and the establishment of a series of special economic zones in the country as part of Afghanistan’s economic development plan are great news for our people, our partners in the region and the rest of the world. Our self-reliance reform plan requires the effective use of development aid and an increase in national revenue. We look forward to discussing our more vigorous programmes with the international community during the 2016 Brussels international conference on Afghanistan. The relevant actors in our region should realize that they can benefit from the peace dividend of Afghanistan.

We are diligently working to strengthen good governance and the rule of law, protect and promote the rights of all Afghans, and enhance the fight against narcotics. In this effort, we are building the internal capabilities of our nation. We are making progress in the restoration of credibility in the electoral process. We have already begun to implement the recommendations of the Special Electoral Reform Commission.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that despite constant attacks on our sovereignty and people, Afghanistan stands strong and united in the face of terror. We will not be defeated by extremist elements that want to destroy the progress that we have collectively achieved since 2001. We have demonstrated time and

again that we are willing to move forward and are committed to working towards bringing about peace. Currently, extremism worldwide threatens our core values and aims to divide us. Afghanistan is fighting terrorist threats every day, and we expect there to be a stronger global partnership to holistically address the root causes of those threatening activities. We must ensure that the voice of reason prevails and present a unified front against terrorism in all its aspects and wherever it exists.

In that regard, we are very grateful for the unconditional support of the Council in the past and look forward to a fruitful and effective relationship in the future to create a world of justice and peace. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the courageous men and women of so many nations that have served and sacrificed their lives alongside their Afghan comrades and partners in combating terrorism and seeking a better future for the people of Afghanistan. We shall honour their courage and memory by finishing our task at hand. We also extend our heartfelt condolences to the families of those civilians who tragically lost their lives during the recent barbaric attacks by Daesh in various parts of the world.

As the new representative of a transformed Afghanistan with a strong popular mandate and high expectations from the United Nations, I hope that the Council will continue to act on the plight of millions of my people who have seen nearly four decades of imposed conflicts. Let us therefore reaffirm our long-standing commitment to guarantee an Afghanistan that stands in peace and security because its implications are, by all accounts, far-reaching and essential for global peace and security.

**The President:** On behalf of the Council, I wish to welcome Ambassador Saikal to New York. He plays an incredibly important role in bringing what is happening in Afghanistan here to the Council. We count on his wisdom and counsel.

I shall now give the floor to members of the Security Council.

**Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi** (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): For more than 10 years, Spain has maintained an unwavering commitment to Afghanistan and its future. That commitment has been made by Spain's Government, its institutions and its people. We have committed to building on the principles of freedom,

security, democracy and human rights. I think that that is a goal shared by the Council and by Afghanistan.

In upholding such principles and as part of Spain's commitment to supporting Afghanistan, more than 100 Spaniards have lost their lives. The two most recent fatalities occurred some 10 days ago, when Jorge García Tudela and Isidro Gabino Sanmartín Hernández, two police officers who were members of the security detail of the Spanish Embassy in Kabul, were killed. They, together with five Afghan civilians, lost their lives in a Taliban-perpetrated attack that took place on 11 December. I wish to dedicate the beginning of this statement to the memory of all of those who died. I also wish to repeat Spain's rejection of violence and extremism in whatever form they take. They are serious threats to regional and international peace, security and stability. They must therefore be combated with the determination and unity of the entire international community.

Spain fully aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union.

I wish to thank Mr. Haysom for being with us today and pay due tribute to the tremendous work that he undertakes daily and that he has been doing for almost 14 years — not just Mr. Haysom but also the members of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, both Afghan and international staff. We also pay tribute to the work carried out by the United Nations programmes and agencies operating in the country.

The year now drawing to a close is the first of the transformation decade for Afghanistan and the first in which the Afghan National Security Forces have been able to take full responsibility for preserving the security of the entire country. It has been a year full of challenges and tests for Afghanistan but considerable progress has also been made, such as the establishment and consolidation of the National Unity Government, which we very much welcome. We also wish to congratulate the Government on the way in which it has carried out its role and the decisive way in which President Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah have rolled out a raft of reforms in the areas of economy, governance and the fight against corruption. They are to be commended for such efforts. We call upon the Afghan authorities to continue to implement reforms in order to rigorously apply measures adopted at the policy level and thus to build on the achievements

that we have witnessed in recent years in key areas, such as education and human rights.

Afghanistan will be able to call upon the full support of the international community as it continues in its task. We are sure that the ministerial conference on Afghanistan in Brussels in October 2016 will be a key opportunity for all of us to renew our commitment to the development and future of Afghanistan. Until that Brussels meeting Afghanistan will have to continue to face ongoing challenges, including electoral reform, security, the humanitarian situation and the migration crisis.

The economic situation in the country is one of the major challenges that the Afghan people currently face. We very much welcome, therefore, the measures adopted to boost tax earnings and promote job creation. Such activities together with the actions that have been taken to ensure that Afghan citizens, and especially the young and all who, because of their education, are able to contribute to the future of the country, stay in the country rather than emigrating will be key to laying the foundation for a prosperous Afghanistan. We also welcome all that has been done regionally at the economic level to promote cooperation. However, economic growth requires a secure environment and, therefore, improving the security situation is vital and, like economic cooperation, will require regional support. It will also have a positive regional impact.

We very much welcome the recent ministerial conference in Islamabad, the fifth in the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, which was held earlier this month. Spain welcomed the opportunity to be able to participate in the Process as one of the supporting countries. We believe that the conditions will soon be met to allow Afghanistan to resume the peace process in a decisive way and that it will be able to further pursue the process of national reconciliation for all Afghans. We call upon all those who are in a position to do so to help rekindle the national reconciliation process and dialogue. We would like to highlight the key role being played by Pakistan, the United States of America and the People's Republic of China in that process.

Spain wishes to see work continue on two issues that we deem to be important: the role of women and the situation of children. We therefore welcome the adoption of the first set of measures to apply resolution 1325 (2000), and we urge the Government to pursue such efforts until the measures apply in all regions of

Afghanistan. With regard to the situation of children, we encourage the Government to continue pursuing the full and robust implementation of necessary measures as part of the road map.

Spain is more than willing to cooperate and collaborate with Afghanistan, including here in the Security Council, to consolidate and build peace and security in Afghanistan. We are also more than willing to support the efforts of the Afghan people and Government as they seek to bring about stability and economic and social progress. There are many Afghan citizens, Spanish citizens and others who have given all, including their lives, to support this endeavour. We do not wish to let them down.

**Mr. Bertoux** (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his briefing. I also thank the Ambassador of Afghanistan for his first important statement to the Council.

France aligns itself with the statement that will be delivered on behalf of the European Union.

For Afghanistan, 2015 was a year of progress and many challenges. First, from a political perspective, the transition started in September 2014 and the gradual consolidation of the National Unity Government have raised the expectations of the Afghan population, neighbouring countries and the international community. The Afghan Government has shown its willingness to move forward in circumstances that are, at times, difficult. I wish to underscore my country's support for the Afghan Government and encourage it to continue the efforts it has been making for more than a year and a half now. France also welcomes the announcement made at the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process Conference in Islamabad on 7 and 8 December on the resumption of the peace and reconciliation initiatives, a process critical to the country's national reconciliation and lasting stabilization.

On the security front, the conflict has continued to spread and the level of violence unfortunately remains high, with numerous casualties, including growing numbers of civilians. The Afghan security forces have made notable progress and have kept control over Afghanistan's main urban centres. However, the Afghan Government and its international partners should not relax their efforts to strengthen the security forces' capacity, because the situation remains fragile in many provinces. The Taliban's temporary occupation of the city of Kunduz in October revealed the Afghan forces'



vulnerabilities as well as the new capacities that the insurgency has acquired.

In the area of human rights, the situation of women and children remains precarious, as was shown recently by the recent tragic stoning of the young woman named Rokhshana who had been accused of adultery. It is essential that Afghan civil society and the authorities continue to act to fully implement their national action plan on women and peace and security adopted in follow up to resolution 1325 (2000). The international community should also continue to support the Afghan authorities in implementing their commitments regarding the protection of children in armed conflict.

The fight against narcotics and the illicit economy is also among these challenges and of great concern to France. The large-scale production and export of narcotics in Afghanistan are extremely damaging to the country's security, stability and development, since they help to finance the insurgency, destabilize the economy and weaken the Government. They create a threat to public health that affects Afghanistan first and foremost but that also extends well beyond it to affect the region and many other countries worldwide. We welcome Afghanistan's adoption on 15 October of a national action plan against drugs for 2015 to 2019, reflecting its determination to pursue a comprehensive approach to fighting this scourge in close cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. France is committed to ensuring that the United Nations plays a greater role in addressing this major challenge, particularly in coordinating the United Nations agencies and programmes involved in the drug war.

In this difficult context, the international community should not cease its efforts to support Afghanistan in achieving greater stability, prosperity and democracy. As Afghanistan continues its political and security transition, it is more important than ever that the United Nations adapt the role it plays. Its support to the Government remains crucial, particularly in enabling the people to benefit from Government programmes and international assistance. In that regard, we emphasize the importance of the joint discussions on the changes to be desired in the support that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the United Nations can give the country. We hope they will be a useful guide in the renewal of UNAMA's mandate in March.

In that context, France would like to emphasize its support for the proposals made in the final report

of the Tripartite Review Commission regarding the establishment of a narrow mandate that confers on UNAMA strengthened powers in the areas of good offices, protecting human rights, coordinating humanitarian activities and combating the production and trafficking of narcotics. France is ready to contribute to that discussion and will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with Afghanistan, particularly within the framework of our friendship and cooperation treaty with Afghanistan.

In conclusion, I would like to commend the efforts of all the United Nations staff in Afghanistan, who, as we know, are working in particularly difficult conditions.

**Mr. Baublys** (Lithuania): I would like to welcome Ambassador Saikal of Afghanistan to the Council and to thank Special Representative Nicholas Haysom for his brutally truthful assessment of the situation.

We stand by the people of Afghanistan and its National Unity Government. The deteriorating situation in the Hindu Kush calls for renewed engagement on the part of the international community. But we also expect more from the Government and the regional Powers. The hopes of the transformation decade must not be lost.

The conflict has already exacted a heavy toll on Afghans. The Taliban campaign shows no signs of abating. Fanatics affiliated with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant add fuel to the conflict. Suicide attacks and improvised explosive devices maim and kill hundreds of innocents daily. Human rights defenders, women's rights activists, workers from non-governmental organizations, journalists and staff members of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) are being targeted, as happened recently in Kunduz. Kidnappings and beheadings of Hazaras are inflaming inter-ethnic violence. We call on everyone in the region to support the Afghan-led peace process in good faith. President Ghani's efforts to restart direct peace talks with the Taliban represent the only way forward. Any future accord must retain all the major achievements of the past decade, including increased protection of Afghan women's rights.

We call on the National Unity Government to continue its reforms. A broad consensus is required in order to improve the rule of law, the protection of human rights, the fight against corruption and reform of the electoral process. The economy's weak performance

does not augur well. We are worried that the public discontent around the country is also an expression of public uncertainty about its future.

Opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan decreased this year but, given the nexus that exists between drug production and trafficking and the insurgency, it is imperative that the new National Drug Action Plan does not become just another paper. The addiction rate among the people of Afghanistan is staggering and could have a very bad effect on the country's future.

As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General noted, young and capable Afghans are leaving their homeland, and the National Unity Government should focus on efforts aimed at creating jobs and improving the country's business climate. While there is clear evidence of gains in women's rights, violence against women and girls remains widespread. The stoning of a 21-year-old woman in Ghor province was despicable, and it must be investigated and those responsible brought to justice. We commend the Government's efforts to promote its national action plan based on resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. Women must be able to participate fully in every aspect of Afghanistan's public processes.

Enhancing regional cooperation remains an important element in building a prosperous and peaceful Afghanistan. All of its neighbours have a stake in Afghanistan's stability, and we commend their continued engagement in efforts towards regional security and economic advancement during the latest meetings of the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan and the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process.

Lithuania's diplomatic ties with Afghanistan date back to the 1930s. We remain a partner, supporter and contributor in its efforts to achieve prosperity. We will continue our political, military and civilian support and promotion of regional initiatives. Lithuania remains engaged in the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission and continues to participate in the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan. Given the recent spike in violence, we urgently need to discuss the international community's further engagement in Afghanistan after 2016. Lithuania stands ready to increase its military training and assistance mission within the Resolute Support Mission format.

The presence of UNAMA remains critical to the advancement of human rights, democratic processes

and development in Afghanistan. We hope that during next year's Security Council negotiations on UNAMA's mandate, its presence in the field in remote regions of the country will be seen as vital to achieving peace, self-reliance and growth in Afghanistan.

**Mr. Van Bohemen** (New Zealand): I would like to thank Special Representative Haysom for his briefing and Ambassador Saikal for his statement.

The situation in Afghanistan is a sobering but compelling demonstration of how hard it is for a country to escape the ravages of civil war, terrorism and the breakdown of civil order, even after years of investment on the part of the international community in defeating the terrorists, rebuilding the country's national security forces and re-establishing the basic infrastructure of a State. As the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/942) concludes and as Mr. Haysom has reaffirmed, Afghanistan continues to face formidable security, economic and political challenges. Kunduz, a major provincial capital, was captured by the Taliban, albeit for a short period; Kabul continues to come under attack and hundreds of thousands have been killed and wounded. And the fighting has had the multiplying effect of hindering the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and other international actors in the country in carrying out their work.

As the Secretary-General's report also implicitly recognizes, we have no option but to persevere in the determination that the situation will improve. To take any other course would be to concede to the terrorists and accept the failure of the Afghan State and all of the consequences that would follow for Afghanistan, the Afghan people, Afghanistan's neighbours and the wider international community.

We commend the Afghan Government and the Afghan security forces that continue to face challenges that must at times seem unending and insurmountable. We also welcome the commitment from the nations of the Resolute Support Mission to maintain current levels of support and training, assisting and advising Afghanistan's security forces through 2016. At the same time, we must urge the Government of Afghanistan to do more to cement the institutions of governance and build trust across the various dividing lines of geography, ethnicity and faith. Inclusivity must be the touchstone in reestablishing Afghanistan as a fully functioning State. We urge the Afghan people, including the Taliban, to embrace the reality that their

future as a country depends on their overcoming rather than emphasizing the divisions.

We endorse Mr. Haysom's exhortations to the Government of Afghanistan to demonstrate greater effectiveness, both in governance and in the delivery of Government to the Afghanistan people and, in particular, tackling the problem of corruption, which undermines confidence internally and externally. We urge Afghanistan's neighbours to embrace the reality that there can be no stability in the region without a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. We welcome the momentum of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process and urge participants to carry forward the progress at the most recent meeting in Islamabad.

I want to draw attention to three specific matters: the growing threat of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the importance of the Taliban sanctions regime in promoting peace and discouraging those who have no interest in peace, and the continuing threat posed by improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and the need for a stronger response to that threat.

It was perhaps inevitable that ISIL would establish a presence in Afghanistan, whether by deliberate strategy or by Afghan groups seeking to take on the depraved aura. Whatever the motivation, those who associate with ISIL exclude themselves from a political dialogue and must be treated in the same manner as ISIL adherents in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere. It is important that we heed the call of the Security Council in resolution 2253 (2015), adopted in the past week, for Member States to forward listing requests for ISIL affiliates to the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011), and 2253 (2015), concerning ISIL (Daesh), Al-Qaida, and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities. The framework and tools are there to target these groups. Their effectiveness depends on Member States using them.

The Taliban sanctions regime has more nuanced purposes. It seeks to encourage those members of the Taliban who are prepared to reconcile with the Government and to eschew links with those listed as international terrorists, while at the same time seeking to isolate those who continue to constitute a threat to the peace, stability and security of Afghanistan. With respect to the first element, I note that the resolution 2255 (2015) adopted today clarifies the procedures for exemptions to the travel ban for peace talks. As Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), I urge full use of those procedures and

look forward to close coordination with the Sanctions Committee in their implementation. With regard to the second element, I urge Member States to make full use of the listing procedures to list individuals associated with the Taliban who profit from ongoing instability. That is especially important in the effort to counter the narcotics trade.

As the Secretary-General reminds us, IEDs remain one of the biggest killers of Afghan security forces and civilians, including children. The resolution 2255 (2015) adopted today notes the problem, including the need for enhanced coordination among Member States and industry. But in New Zealand's view, that is not enough. We are disappointed that, unlike the General Assembly, the Security Council could not agree on stronger actions to more effectively target the IED problem. In negotiations, we proposed the incorporation of component parts in the arms embargo. Regrettably, that idea was not taken up. As Chair, I look forward to discussing what more our Sanctions Committee can do to address this insidious and devastating threat.

Lastly, we commend Mr. Haysom and the staff of UNAMA for their dedication and commitment to Afghanistan and to the United Nations.

**Mr. Hmoud** (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to extend our profound thanks to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Mr. Nicholas Haysom, for his comprehensive briefing.

Jordan again emphasizes the importance of providing ongoing regional and international support to Afghanistan to help it advance in the peace and reform processes, which will play a decisive role in the development and institutionalization of democracy in Afghanistan and in the fight against terrorism. These are the most crucial elements required to achieve security and stability in Afghanistan.

Jordan welcomes all the positive steps taken by the Afghan Government to improve the economic and political situation in the country, including the legislative reforms and the implementation of the anti-corruption strategy. We also welcome the constructive recommendations issued by the Special Electoral Reform Commission, which could enhance the confidence of the Afghan people in the Government. In that regard, we urge the Afghan Government not to delay the scheduling of the parliamentary elections,

and we hope that favourable security conditions will be created to conduct the elections in a free, transparent and comprehensive manner.

The recent attack and temporary seizure of the city of Kunduz perpetrated by the Taliban is an especially disquieting development. It underscores the importance of the Afghan authorities' imposition of its control for the security situation in the country, especially in the north, to prevent the repetition of such attacks, which may increase security challenges, lead to deterioration of the humanitarian situation and increase the number of the internally displaced persons in the country. We also express our grave concern over the growing threat posed by the terrorist organization the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham in Afghanistan, which demonstrates the imperative need to confront this threat and not allow armed elements and terrorist groups to exploit the withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan. In that regard, I would like to underline the importance of improving relations between Afghanistan and the neighbouring States and enhancing the regional cooperation to confront the manifestations of violent extremism and to limit the movement of terrorist groups.

In addition, international support for the Afghan authorities to enable them to confront terrorism is an important element to achieve progress. In that regard, it will have positive consequences in controlling the borders and combating terrorism. Therefore, at this stage, it is necessary to continue support to the Afghan Government and the Afghan security forces to achieve security in Afghanistan, to ensure the capacity of the security forces to control the domestic situation, protect the Afghan people and contribute to regional security. We urge all parties to assume their responsibilities under international humanitarian law, to refrain from any breaches of the law and to prevent the use of prohibited weapons, which have been used increasingly in the recent past.

Jordan underscores the importance of promoting the rule of law, monitoring all violations of human rights perpetrated in Afghanistan and investigating all crimes of violence perpetrated against civilians, especially women and children, to guarantee accountability and prevent impunity. It is also important to ensure the security of UNAMA staff members and to protect them from any acts of aggression, in order to facilitate their work and allow them to discharge their duties in improving the security and other situations in

Afghanistan. We also welcome the Afghan President's adoption of the Afghan National Drug Action Plan for 2015-2019. The increasing nexus between the financing of terrorism from the profits earned from drug trafficking demands that the Afghan Government intensify its efforts to follow a comprehensive approach to fight the illicit use, trafficking and production of drugs.

Finally, Jordan commends the important role played by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Haysom, in Afghanistan and expresses its support for his efforts to promote the peace process and bringing together the points of view of all the parties to the conflict and improve relations between Afghanistan and its neighbouring States, in order to support and achieve peace and reconciliation between the Afghan Government and the armed groups. In that respect, we call upon all parties to the conflict to respond positively to those efforts and those of the international community, translating their commitments into constructive actions on the ground, and to forge ahead with direct talks among themselves in order to arrive at a sustainable political settlement. For that is the optimum way and the foundation for progress in Afghanistan in order to confront the economic and security challenges facing the country.

**Mr. Barros Melet (Chile)** (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Mr. Nicholas Haysom, for his briefing. We would also like to express our gratitude to the new Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Mr. Mahmoud Saikal, for his first briefing to the Council.

We reiterate our condemnation of the terrorist attack in the vicinity of the Embassy of Spain in Kabul on 11 December and convey our condolences to the families of the victims and to the Governments of Spain and Afghanistan. We note with deep-rooted concern that the security situation in the country has deteriorated over the past few months, owing to the increase in the number of attacks perpetrated by the Taliban and other insurgent groups. The seizure of the city of Kunduz represents a worrying setback in the situation. Against that backdrop, we welcome the provision of security assistance to support the Afghan National Security Forces. The cooperation of the international community in the areas of development, infrastructure and the peace process has been significant and reflects

an essential multi-dimensional focus for supporting the Government and the people of Afghanistan. All such support must be accompanied by national efforts, and we therefore hope that the Government will soon appoint a Minister for Defence and an Attorney General as soon as possible.

The humanitarian situation cannot be ignored. The security situation has profoundly impacted the civilian population, and the earthquake of 26 October has further exacerbated the humanitarian situation, causing the mass displacement of persons, particularly in the north-east of Afghanistan. The international community must stand ready to respond favourably to humanitarian appeals and support the process of development in that country. We would like to underscore the importance of Afghan-led initiatives aimed at promoting inter-ethnic and interreligious dialogue. For that reason, we attach particular importance to the convening of the first Ulema National Conference in Kabul on 12 October. The Ulema Conference brought together leaders from all parts of the country to discuss the peace process and issues of national interest. We hope that that conference will develop into a standing body, promoting national reconciliation and contributing to fighting violent extremism. We are grateful for the support and assistance provided by UNAMA to the holding of the conference, which was a UNAMA-led initiative for the consolidation of peace.

The ceasefire agreement between the Government and local stakeholders in Baghlan province also deserves our support and backing. We would like to express our wish that that agreement will last and even be replicated in various other regions of the country. Interaction and dialogue with local representatives is one way of contributing to building and fostering trust and of disseminating messages of tolerance and understanding, which we believe to be core elements, if progress is to be made in the peace process and if stability is to be promoted in areas affected by the conflict.

We hail President Ghani's decision to adopt the recommendation of the Special Electoral Reform Commission, which seeks to re-establish the quota of seats set aside for women at 25 per cent in elections to provincial and district councils. We firmly believe that it is essential to increase the participation and leadership of Afghan women in society, in order to establish a lasting peace.

The emergence of the self-styled Islamic State in Afghanistan as a new armed non-State actor has rendered the security situation even more complicated and dangerous, representing a serious obstacle to the peace process, the protection of civilians and the delivery of humanitarian assistance. It goes hand-in-hand with the destabilizing effect of the growing clashes between the various factions of the Taliban. We hope that the adoption today of resolution 2555 (2015) and of resolution 2253 (2015) last Thursday will complement national efforts aimed at appropriately addressing the actions of those individuals and organizations that seek to profit from the aforementioned destabilization.

The United Nations system, and the Council in particular, must be untiring in its commitment to the people and the Government of Afghanistan, so that we can comprehensively address together the various challenges facing Afghanistan. Chile will seek to contribute, in various bodies, to the efforts of the United Nations aimed at peacebuilding and fostering stability in Afghanistan, so that that nation can advance in achieving inclusive and sustainable development.

Given that this is the last time that we will speak on this topic in our capacity as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, we would like to convey Chile's gratitude to the staff and leadership of UNAMA for the work that they carry out. We hope that we have contributed to that work in our activities in the Council, particularly with regard to the role of women and the eradication of the practice of the recruitment of child combatants.

**Mr. Lucas (Angola):** We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Mr Nicholas Haysom, for presenting the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (S/2015/942). We commend the work accomplished by UNAMA in such difficult circumstances. We welcome the statement by the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations, Ambassador Mahmoud Saikal.

Angola co-sponsored resolution 2255 (2015), unanimously adopted today, strengthening the sanctions regime against the Taliban and its associates. The resolution translates the resolve of Angola and the international community to stop all forms of support to extremist groups in Afghanistan, given the fundamental threat that they represent to international

peace and security. Besides applying sanctions, we underline the importance of a comprehensive political process in Afghanistan aimed at supporting peace and reconciliation among Afghans.

The debate that we are holding today offers another opportunity to review the unfolding political, security, humanitarian and human rights situation in Afghanistan, while the country is completing its first year of the transformation decade. We took good note, with great sympathy, of the diligent work being carried out by the Afghan National Unity Government to strengthen good governance and the rule of law, promote the rights of all Afghans and enhance the national capabilities of the nation, as well as the progress made in the restoration of the credibility of the electoral process.

However, we are deeply concerned over the reported increase in the instability and worsening security situation in Afghanistan, with attacks by the Taliban throughout the country and the growing presence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The decrease in international military support has exacted a heavy toll on the Afghan security forces, which, according to the report, have withstood the mounting pressures, while being able to retake areas that had fallen into the Taliban's control. The commitment of Afghanistan's allies to continuing to assist the Afghan security forces in order to ensure stability and security in the country expresses the importance, for the country and for the entire international community, of remaining steadfast with Afghanistan in crucial and dangerous times. Events such as the capture of Kunduz by the Taliban, recovered a few days later by the Afghan armed forces with the support of American troops, was yet another demonstration of the danger that that group represents for the institutions in place and of its ability to continue destabilizing Afghanistan.

The Afghan people continue to pay an intolerable price in terms of loss of life. They endure violations of their human rights, are caught in the crossfire and are victims of indiscriminate attacks, targeted killings and intolerance by the forces of darkness. The millions of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran, the large number in the current wave of refugees towards Europe, and the very slow pace of returns clearly demonstrate the sad plight of the Afghan people and their lack of confidence in the future.

After some hopeful signs that the peace process was on the verge of being launched, we note with disappointment that the possible political solution to

the conflict has reached an impasse. We took note of the statement made by the Prime Minister of Pakistan during his recent visit to Washington, D.C., on preparations to facilitate negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan Government. We welcome the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process ministerial conference in Islamabad, and we stress the need to enhance mutual trust and cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Friendly, mutually respectful relationships between the two countries are crucial to create an enabling environment for the peace process and to ensure security, stability and prosperity for both States. That is a positive sign that countries of the region can engage in the pursuit of solutions for peace in Afghanistan and that other members of the international community are ready to support an Afghan-led peace process. Local initiatives and peacebuilding efforts by national actors with a view to promoting stability, such as the local ceasefire agreement reached in September covering regions of Baghlan province, reinforces the idea that it is possible, through dialogue between the Taliban and the Government, to come to a peaceful solution to the conflict. We extend our encouragement to UNAMA in support of such initiatives.

The *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2015* points to a shrinking of the illegal drug economy — a curse on which Afghanistan is so heavily dependent. That is a key development for the country's normalcy. We therefore support and encourage the national drug action plan. The success of that plan is even more important, as it is a cornerstone in the fight against the financing of terrorist groups such as the Taliban, ISIL, Al-Qaida and their affiliates.

In conclusion, in spite of the notable progress achieved by the Afghan people in the last few years, the challenges facing the country are immense. The Afghans still have to achieve new levels of cooperation and understanding to allow the country to overcome its present and bloody past. Moreover, we must stress the international community's commitment to Afghanistan and the need to be steadfast in assisting the country — no matter how high the price might be and taking into account what is at stake — and the need to establish the basis for a better and more prosperous future.

**Mr. Wang Min** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for organizing today's meeting on Afghanistan. China listened carefully to the briefing provided by the

Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Haysom, and the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Saikal.

The year 2015 marks the starting point of the 10-year transitional period in Afghanistan. Over the past year, the National Unity Government made tremendous efforts to promote national stability, promote economic development, strengthen the rule of law and achieve positive results, which should be acknowledged by the international community. However, Afghanistan still faces serious challenges in terms of reconstruction and economic and social development. In addition, the achievement of peace and prosperity remains a long-term task that calls for the unremitting efforts of the various sectors of Afghan society and the robust support of the international community. I should like to stress several points.

First, it is necessary to continue to help the National Unity Government to strengthen its national governance. Judging from its rule over the past year, the Government is still pressing forward to explore its path of national development, despite the many challenges it faces. For that reason, the international community should continue to provide support and assistance on the basis of respect for the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, and effectively honour its commitment to assist Afghanistan, and help the National Unity Government strengthen its capacity for self-reliance. We hope that the different sectors of Afghan society will grow in unity and continue to prioritize the resolution of their differences through dialogue and negotiation, and work together to achieve national reconstruction and economic social development.

Secondly, it is important to provide firm support for the peace process in Afghanistan, to push for an Afghan-led and -owned peace process and to achieve broad and inclusive political reconciliation as the ultimate way forward to resolve the Afghan question. China calls upon the different factions in Afghanistan to place the interests of the country and the people first, and to resume negotiations as soon as possible. We hope that the relevant countries will continue to provide the conditions necessary for the resumption of talks between the Afghan Government and the Taliban, and to provide assistance in that connection. China is ready, together with the countries concerned, to continue to play a constructive role in Afghanistan's peace process

and to create platforms where the resumption of talks can be facilitated.

Thirdly, it is imperative to improve the country's current security situation, which remains fragile. Armed clashes and terrorist activities, which have resulted in serious casualties among civilians, are a frequent occurrence. Countries in the region and the international community should adhere to a common, holistic and sustainable approach to security based on cooperation, and help the Afghan Government build capacity in that regard. They should also help the country's security and police forces effectively deal with all types of security threats and challenges. It is necessary to promote the exchange of information on counter-terrorism and border control, and to fight terrorism, transnational crime and drug smuggling jointly.

Fourthly, continuous efforts are required to bring Afghanistan into the realm of regional cooperation. China welcomes Afghanistan's membership to the World Trade Organization and commends the positive results achieved at the fifth ministerial meeting of the Istanbul Process. China is ready to continue to work so as to ensure that that mechanism plays a greater role in Afghanistan's peace and reconstruction process. Countries in the region and the international community should continue to provide support and assistance to Afghanistan in terms of transportation, infrastructure, trade, investment, markets and tariffs, and should help the country fully leverage its advantages in terms of geography and resources with a view to enhancing its capacity for sustainable self-development. China welcomes Afghanistan's active participation in the Silk Road Initiative and supports the fact that Afghanistan may soon join the regional development tide.

As a neighbour to Afghanistan and a good friend of the Afghan people, China has been a strong supporter of Afghanistan's efforts to explore a development path that takes into account its own conditions and reflects the aspirations of its people. China has been supporting Afghanistan's peace and reconstruction process in our own way, including by providing support and assistance based on the needs of the country. Recently, China announced the provision of ¥/RMB 500 million in the form of gratis assistance, which will be used towards the construction of housing. And in the immediate aftermath of the recent earthquake, China provided humanitarian relief, materials and emergency cash assistance. China is ready, together with the

international community, to continue to work so that Afghanistan may achieve durable peace and prosperity as soon as possible.

**Mr. Laro** (Nigeria): The Nigerian delegation thanks you, Madam President, for organizing this important debate. We also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Haysom, for his update on the situation in Afghanistan. We acknowledge the presence of the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, and thank him for his statement. Our comments will focus on the security situation, electoral reform, national reconciliation and counter-narcotics efforts.

Concerning the security situation, we note the ongoing challenges, including arbitrary killings, violence and criminality linked to the activities of the Taliban and other anti-Government elements. The capture of Kunduz and 16 district centres by the Taliban highlights the grave threat that the group poses to the peace, security and stability of Afghanistan. We commend the Afghan security forces for regaining control of Kunduz and most of the captured district centres.

According to the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/942), the fall of Kunduz was preceded by strained working relations between security institutions and civilian authorities. Placing that in a context of lessons learned, we encourage all concerned to make efforts to improve their working relations. Situations that may be exploited by the Taliban and other anti-Government elements to destabilize the country must be identified and ameliorated.

Regarding electoral reform, we applaud the decision of President Ghani to approve the restoration of reserved seats for women in provincial and district council elections to 25 per cent. That is a clear demonstration of the President's commitment to the empowerment of women and the advancement of their rights. We urge the Government to continue to work towards enhancing the participation of women in politics and governance. With respect to national reconciliation, we encourage further efforts to resuscitate the peace process. We consider it vital to national cohesion and stability; reviving it would therefore be in the national interest.

We note the outcome of the fifth ministerial conference of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, held in Islamabad on 9 December, reaffirming the commitment of regional stakeholders to resolving the

conflict in Afghanistan through peaceful negotiations. We are convinced that only Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace and reconciliation initiatives can bring lasting peace, security and stability to the country. We therefore urge the Taliban and other armed opposition groups to lay down their arms and engage in dialogue with the Government. It is crucial that the reconciliation agenda be sustained in the interest of the people of Afghanistan. Still with respect to reconciliation, we applaud the agreement of the first-ever local ceasefire with the official endorsement of the Government. The agreement, which prohibits Afghan security forces and the Taliban from conducting military operations in the district of Baghlan province, was successful in reducing violence during the reporting period. We urge all concerned to abide by the terms of the agreement.

Concerning the issue of counter-narcotics, we note the decrease in opium poppy production by 19 per cent with respect to 2014. That is especially significant as it marks the first time since 2009 that a reduction in opium poppy cultivation has been achieved. We expect counter-narcotics efforts in the country to continue to yield positive results as the authorities implement the national counter-narcotics plan for 2015-2019. An important dimension of any counter-narcotics effort is the fight against money-laundering and illicit financial flows that may be used for terrorist financing. International cooperation is essential if that effort is to be effective. In that regard, we welcome the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the financial intelligence units of Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

While significant progress has been made in Afghanistan across various sectors, considerable challenges remain. In addressing those challenges, the role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) remains important. Sustained regional and international support is also vital. We pay tribute to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Haysom, the staff of UNAMA and Afghanistan's development partners for their commitment to placing Afghanistan on the path to peace, security, reconciliation and development.

**Mr. Rycroft** (United Kingdom): I am very grateful to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Haysom for his briefing and for all his hard work in Afghanistan leading the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I join others in welcoming Ambassador Saikal to the Council in his new role and look forward to working together.



I want to begin by welcoming today's unanimous adoption of resolution 2255 (2015). By renewing the Taliban sanctions regime for another 18 months, we have shown that we mean it when we say that there will be no weakening of our resolve and no let-up in our efforts to disrupt the finances and activities of the Taliban. Sadly, the continued need for this sanctions regime shows that Council support for Afghanistan remains vital and that our job is not yet done. UNAMA is a vital part of that support, and I applaud the Mission's determination to continue fulfilling its mandate, often under difficult circumstances.

The reasons for our continued role are clear. Together, we want to build a secure and stable Afghanistan — an Afghanistan that no longer exports insecurity; an Afghanistan where people can thrive, prosper and live in peace. Those are aims that all should share in Afghanistan, its neighbours in the region and the international community. I believe that there are two elements at the heart of securing that future: security and the economy.

Regarding the first point, this year's fighting season has shown that making security a reality for all is exceptionally tough. The Afghan National Security Forces and all of us face an unrelenting foe in the Taliban. I want to pay tribute to all the international service men and women who have lost their lives, and in particular I offer my condolences to the families of the six international soldiers killed near Bagram today. I also join others in praising the bravery and resilience of the Afghan security forces. There have been many sacrifices and many challenges this year, particularly in Helmand province, but the Afghan security forces are showing that they can overcome the challenges by holding and retaking district centres from Taliban control. The Taliban's continued attacks against civilians, including women and children near Kandahar, as well as at the Spanish Embassy compound in Kabul, undermine any pretence that it is fighting for religious ideals.

In response to such threats, the Afghan security forces will need sustained help. That is why the United Kingdom supports the Afghan National Army Officer Academy and gives \$110 million in annual funding for security. It is why we have extended our military presence, as announced in October. I hope that Member States will all continue their vital assistance. But to guarantee long-term security in Afghanistan, a peace process is the only solution, so I warmly welcome the

progress made at the Heart of Asia meeting and the associated meetings in Islamabad. I pay tribute to the commitment and determination shown by President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah in pursuing improved relations with the region and in starting peace talks. Let us all urge Pakistan and Afghanistan to meet their commitments to pursue peace with those willing to negotiate and to take concerted action against those unwilling to do so. The United Kingdom strongly supports the call of the Heart of Asia conference for peace talks to begin urgently.

In addition to the Taliban threat, we share concern at the emergence of small groups of former Afghan and Pakistani Taliban claiming allegiance to Daesh. As we showed in this Chamber last week, the Council is united in its opposition to Daesh and its affiliates. Let us give our full support to the National Unity Government of Afghanistan in combatting such groups.

Turning to my second point, economic growth is vital if Afghans are to remain committed to Afghanistan's future. Afghanistan's potential is significant. The inauguration of the Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India gas pipeline this month shows that this potential can be realized. I congratulate Turkmenistan, Pakistan and India, as well as Afghanistan, on their support for that project. The pipeline, like KASA 1000 and other regional projects, can have huge benefits for all the countries of the region.

Afghanistan's potential is also seen in its people — people like Najina, an 18-year old young woman studying at the Afghanistan National Institute of Music in Kabul. Najina once said that she had no hope of being recognized for any talent, yet today she has a chance to realize her ambition to become the best pianist in the country. Students like Najina are not just continuing Afghanistan's rich musical heritage; they are also showing that Afghanistan can retain its brightest, its best and its most talented. But ultimately, the people of Afghanistan are the country's greatest asset. Economic growth will be secured thanks to their talents, skills and hard work.

Let me close by restating the United Kingdom's enduring commitment to the Government of Afghanistan, both financially and politically. I am proud to reiterate our strong support for the work of the National Unity Government, and I urge all Afghans and the international community to continue their backing for President Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah. Together, we can help them address the

major economic, security and governance challenges that Afghanistan faces.

**Mr. Ibrahim** (Malaysia): I join earlier speakers in thanking Special Representative Nicholas Haysom for his briefing. We also commend Mr. Haysom and all members and personnel of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their dedication in carrying out their duties under challenging circumstances. I also thank Ambassador Saikal for his statement.

Allow me to begin by reiterating Malaysia's firm support for the reconciliation and reintegration efforts undertaken by the Government of Afghanistan and for UNAMA's strong support in that regard. We also commend the Afghan Government's continuing commitment and efforts to address the increasing political, economic and security challenges faced by the country. We believe that those steps demonstrate the Government's aspirations to establish a more unified and stable country, which, in our view, will contribute positively to regional stability.

The maintenance of peace and stability across the country remains a major challenge and preoccupation of the Government and the security forces. We are concerned that the security situation has markedly deteriorated and the level of security incidents has both increased and intensified. In particular, the Taliban's temporary seizure of Kunduz city and 16 district centres highlighted how fragile the security conditions are. We also share the concern that affiliates of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham are making inroads in Afghanistan. We are also increasingly concerned by the increased involvement of United Nations personnel in security incidents and note that 43 such incidents occurred during the reporting period, including the murder of a United Nations staff member in Kandahar. Malaysia strongly condemns the targeting and attacks on any United Nations personnel and facilities.

It is appalling that Afghan civilians have to continue to suffer the brunt of the conflict, and what is worse, children account for close to one fourth of all casualties. In particular, Malaysia is alarmed that at least 159 children were killed and 505 children were injured just within the span of three months. We continue to urge all parties to the conflict to exercise restraint, and we reiterate that those responsible for violations of international human rights law and humanitarian law must be held accountable.

Despite the challenging security circumstances, Malaysia commends the determination and commitments shown by the Afghan Government in undertaking political reforms, including electoral reform. In that regard, we are pleased to note the Government's approval of seven of the ten recommendations of the Special Electoral Reform Commission submitted in August. Malaysia also welcomes the progress made towards the formation of the new Independent Election Commission and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission. In addition, we are pleased to note the conclusion of a local ceasefire agreement in Baghlan province, with the attendant immediate reduction in violent clashes. Furthermore, the adoption of a resolution in October by the first Ulema National Conference in support of peacebuilding in Afghanistan further illustrates the desire and aspirations of the Afghan population to achieve lasting peace, dialogue and reconciliation with all sides of the conflict. In that regard, Malaysia reiterates that a peaceful, negotiated political settlement is the only way to achieve sustainable peace and stability in the country.

Malaysia commends the ongoing efforts of the Afghan Government to counter the spread of narcotics. We were pleased to learn of the first decrease in opium poppy cultivation areas since 2009, specifically, the cultivation area decreased by 19 per cent in 2015. Potential opium production in 2015 also shows a marked reduction of 48 per cent. Those are certainly significant and encouraging achievements, despite the myriad of political and security challenges faced by the country. The National Drug Action Plan, approved by the President of Afghanistan, is another positive and important step forward in the efforts to combat illicit drugs production and trade, and is a manifestation of the Afghan Government's determination to counter narcotics. We are confident that the close cooperation between the Government of Afghanistan and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime will continue to yield success in addressing the issue of illicit drugs in a comprehensive manner.

Malaysia believes that it remains imperative, at this stage, for the United Nations and the international community to continue to lend their support, encouragement and assistance to the Government of Afghanistan through reconstruction and redevelopment efforts aimed at rebuilding the country. In that context, Malaysia greatly appreciates the ongoing efforts of UNAMA, which has continued to operate in extreme

and increasingly challenging conditions. We also commend the active collaboration of regional partners in promoting security, development and economic advancement in Afghanistan and the region.

I conclude by reaffirming Malaysia's commitment to working closely with all regional and international partners in supporting the Afghan Government in its effort to achieve peace, security and stability.

**Mr. Suárez Moreno** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We wish to thank Mr. Nicholas Hayson, Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and the Ambassador of Afghanistan, Ambassador Saikal, for their statements.

We would also like to convey our condolences to the families of the victims in the wake of the terrorist attack perpetrated in the compound of the Embassy of Spain in Kabul on 11 December. We robustly condemn that terrorist act.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela expresses its concern in the light of the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan resulting from the activities of armed groups operating in various regions. That violence is reflected in the 19 per cent increase in violent incidents, when measured against the same period last year. Such soaring violence explains why instability remains a negative feature in Afghanistan, which impacts the peacebuilding process and the development of that country.

The capture of the city of Kunduz last September by the Taliban represented a setback for the Afghan security forces, which saw their response capacity in the face of the insurgent assault compromised. Such events, together with the presence of groups associated with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS), constitute a further factor of destabilization that raises the stakes for the international community, particularly the Security Council, leading to a pressing need for us to adopt robust measures to curb the flow of foreign terrorist fighters travelling into Afghanistan from the armed conflicts in Iraq and Syria. Countering terrorism means strengthening the capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces as a core institution of the State. The military actions of ISIS and the Taliban represent a setback to the consolidation of peace and to the national reconciliation process, which is spearheaded by UNAMA together with the Afghanistan High Peace Council.

The new political phase facing the Afghan leadership must be shaped by efforts to pursue compliance with the reforms submitted last year, among which the electoral calendar is one of the most important. We welcome the fact that the Afghan Government has approved seven of the ten recommendations submitted to them by the Special Electoral Reform Commission. Raising the quota for the participation of women in district and provincial electoral processes to 25 per cent constitutes one of the most important recommendations.

My country welcomes the recent appointment of officials to various areas of the public administration. Such decisions also strengthen the institutions of the State. However, as pointed out in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/942), the Afghan authorities must take appropriate measures in order to be able to appoint officials to fill the vacancies in public institutions that are of paramount importance for the functioning of the country, such as the Ministry of Defence and the Office of the Attorney General. Likewise, it is extremely important to strengthen the presence and role of the State across the entire country, a step which would boost the trust of the Afghan people in their national institutions.

Together with the threat of violent extremism, drug trafficking represents a serious obstacle to the stability and development of Afghanistan. That aforementioned illegal activity is the main source of funding for the Taliban, enabling them to engage in their terrorist activities. Today, we welcome the fact that there has been a decrease in the poppy harvests compared to last year. Nonetheless, the trade and trafficking in drugs across the region continue to represent a major challenge to the Afghan authorities. In particular, we acknowledge the efforts undertaken by the Government in this area with the assistance of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. We reiterate that the effective fight against drugs requires international cooperation, including with neighbouring countries, to prevent, combat and eliminate this scourge.

That is why, under the principle of common and shared responsibility in the fight against global drug problem, multilateral efforts involving both producers and consumers countries need to be redoubled. The reduction and eradication of crops must be accompanied by simultaneous measures to reduce demand in the drug-consuming countries. Only then can terrorist organizations operating in Afghanistan be cut off from

financial resources resulting from the illegal trade in narcotics.

Moreover, it must be remembered that achieving a firm and lasting peace in Afghanistan goes beyond simply using an military approach. Accordingly, economic and social conditions must be created to overcome the poverty, exclusion and discrimination that have affected citizens for decades and have been major drivers of conflict in the country. The international community should continue to support the people and the Government of Afghanistan by providing resources and building capacity to promote the country's comprehensive development.

Our country expresses its concern at the ongoing attacks by terrorist groups. According to the report of the Secretary-General, the number of people affected rose by 26 per cent, with targeted attacks and clashes being the greatest cause of violence against civilians. In this regard, we are concerned by the 10 per cent increase in the numbers of children killed in conflict as well as by the sexual abuse to which this vulnerable group is victim. We condemn these actions, as they constitute a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, with criminal consequences. Moreover, we recognize the efforts of the Afghan authorities to implement the National Action Plan for Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000). However, we regret that the Taliban is continuing to perpetrate attacks and kidnappings against women in Afghanistan.

In the field of international humanitarian law, we join the Secretary-General's expressions of condemnation on the air attack on a hospital run by Médecins Sans Frontières in Kunduz on 3 October, which unfortunately led to the death or injury of some 30 civilians, including patients and medical staff. We hope that, given the gravity of this unfortunate incident, the investigations being carried out by Afghanistan and the United States will shed light on this regrettable event and apportion the relevant accountability in the hopes that such actions are not repeated in the future.

Likewise, we express our concern over the increasing number of internally displaced persons. This year it reached the figure of 235,000 people, which amounts to an increase of 70 per cent as compared to the previous year. According to the Secretary-General's report, the year 2015 will be the worst year since 2002 in relation to internally displaced persons caused by conflict. While it has not been possible to put an end

to armed conflict with a view to achieving needed stability, we have continued to see a steady increase in such victims.

Finally, we encourage the Government of Afghanistan to pursue its efforts within a comprehensive and inclusive political process leading to the establishment of a firm and lasting peace. We estimate that achieving this goal is linked to the commitment of the Taliban insurgency to resume the peace talks that began earlier this year. To that end, the participation of all sectors of Afghan society is required, together with the assistance of the international community and the United Nations, especially UNAMA, to which we extend our gratitude for the work done. We pay tribute to the officials of the Mission, who with professionalism and dedication, have carried out their tasks in a setting that is not without risks and challenges.

**Mr. Safronkov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Nicholas Haysom, who has been carrying out a very important mission. We would also like to welcome the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Mr. Mahmoud Saikal, to whom we are grateful for his substantive, in-depth and objective statement. We agree with what he said.

The situation in Afghanistan remains complex. We are concerned by the ongoing deterioration of the situation in its northern provinces. The seizure of Kunduz by insurgents and its being held for more than two weeks confirms the high risk of terrorism. We note the unwavering efforts of the Afghan National Security Forces to free that region. Since 2001, the time of the start of the international Operation Enduring Freedom, there had been no provincial capitals captured. The Afghan National Security Forces suffer significant daily losses in clashes with the opposition. We hope to see a report on the implementation of the Security Council mandate on the NATO operations in that country. Indeed, we have been asking for such a report for a long time now.

We are concerned by the high number of civilians in Afghanistan who have been terrorized by this war for such a long time. The violations of international humanitarian law, such as the air strike attack against the hospital in Kunduz, are unacceptable. The possibility of such actions taking place again needs to be totally eliminated. Unfortunately, the predictions previously made in the Security Council on the possible spillover of instability from the south and the south-eastern regions

to the north, which was relatively calm in the past, have come true. These worrying data are confirmed in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/942), and there can be no doubt that the forces of the so-called Islamic State, which are gaining more supporters, including from the Taliban, are systematically strengthening their positions. They study the situation, stockpile weapons and recruit extremists from competing terrorist groups.

Narcotics, whose production in Afghanistan has reached industrial levels, pose a serious threat to peace in Afghanistan the region. Drugs fuel terrorism and transnational organized crime. Narcotics serve to intensify the turf war among various groups for control of drug-trafficking routes, which leads to an increase in instability in Afghanistan itself and in neighbouring States. In that regard, we believe it is important to step up the international community's efforts to combat narcotics production.

We do not agree with the optimistic assessment of the current drug situation in Afghanistan. Recently published official statistics that show a significant decrease in narcotics production in 2015 were calculated after significant changes were made in the way data were collected. As a result, they need to be cross-checked.

Apart from having a direct, harmful impact, drug production is a major source of terrorist financing. In that regard, we think it is necessary to step up the international community's efforts to combat Afghan drug trafficking. We believe today's depressing situation with regard to the drug threat in Afghanistan to be due to a large extent to the passivity of the International Security Assistance Force. However, Russia drew attention to this serious problem and proposed constructive solutions. The military presence now has a good opportunity to address the problem, but it is paying scant attention to combating that evil.

We believe in the need to further promote and bolster cooperation in Afghanistan within existing regional organizations. We welcome the official statement made by Afghanistan announcing that it had become a fully fledged member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. That statement was made by President Ghani during his meeting with President Putin on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit at Ufa in the Russian Federation. In the light of the emerging new threats in Afghanistan and the region, we are banking on the involvement of our Afghan partners in the provision of practical

assistance to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's regional counter-terrorism structures.

In our opinion, international efforts to combat narcotics from Afghanistan must be comprehensive in nature and present throughout the entire illegal drug-trade supply chain. Such efforts should involve destroying drug crops and drugs laboratories, marking precursors and arresting drug lords and including them on sanctions lists. The work of the Collective Security Treaty Organization is also significant. It has solid counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism potential. That was successfully demonstrated during the one-off military exercises of the Organization in Tajikistan in May this year.

We support the line taken by the Afghan Government aimed at achieving sustainable, long-term national reconciliation. We believe that all States must work along those lines to help Afghanistan finally achieve internal peace and stability. The United Nations has approved the basis for national reconciliation. The well-known principles of such reconciliation stipulate that everyone must recognize Afghanistan's Constitution, refrain from having any contact with terrorists and stop fighting against the Government.

Russia has historic links with Afghanistan. We have friendly ties with that country, and Russia will continue to provide assistance to Afghanistan, its Government and its people by strengthening the Afghan National Security Forces. By the end of the year, we hope to have carried out cost-free delivery to Kabul of some large shipments of weapons for the Afghan police. We have been developing trade and economic links and, by the beginning of next year, we plan to hold a meeting of the joint intergovernmental commission on trade and economic cooperation. We are sure that that will provide new impetus for our economic cooperation with Afghanistan.

There can be no doubt about our humanitarian assistance. On 23 November, we provided the World Food Programme in Afghanistan with 57 Kamaz vehicles worth \$2.5 million, and they were provided free of charge. We are ready to continue to build a peaceful, independent, self-sufficient and economically prosperous Afghanistan. We are convinced that Afghanistan can overcome its current challenges.

**Mr. Mahamat Zene** (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I, too, would like to thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan

and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), for his briefing. I also thank Ambassador Mahmoud Saikal, the new Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the United Nations, for his statement and warmly welcome him to the Council.

On the eve of the first anniversary of the departure of International Security Assistance Force from Afghanistan, the security, humanitarian and human rights situation in the country is still of concern, despite the tireless efforts of the new Afghan authorities and the support of the international community. We commend the Afghan Government in its unflinching efforts, which have, among other things, dislodged the Taliban from Kunduz. We reiterate our support to the Afghan authorities and repeat our call to Afghan stakeholders to promote dialogue through the High Peace Council, in the interests of their people, and to implement the Peace and Reconciliation in Afghanistan Programme in line with the Kabul communiqué and the conclusions of the Bonn Conference. To that end, we welcome the 12 October meeting in Kabul of the Ulema National Conference, which was facilitated by the High Peace Council and supported by UNAMA. Its aim was to bring together all parties to the conflict so as to promote peace, and we congratulate President Ghani for approving its conclusions.

With regard to the security situation, the seizure of Kunduz by the Taliban, which we firmly condemn, shows that the situation is unstable and worsening owing to the unfortunate incidents that have claimed the lives of many civilians and international expatriate staff. We deplore the attacks on civilians, and we hope that they will not happen again in future. We extend our condolences to the families of the victims and to the Afghan Government and we hope that those who were injured make a speedy recovery. We also condemn the 11 December terrorist attack carried out near the Spanish Embassy in Kabul. We extend condolences and solidarity to the families of the victims and to the Governments of Afghanistan and Spain. We reiterate our firm condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We underscore the real need to bring the perpetrators of such barbaric acts to justice. Furthermore, we express our serious concern regarding the increase in the number of terrorist attacks and the serious threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters in Afghanistan and the subregion, including those from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. That requires

heightened vigilance and strong mobilization from the international community.

We commend the efforts made by Afghan Government to combat drug trafficking, as well as the 15 October adoption, in partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, of the national drug action plan for the period 2015-2019. We encourage the Government to continue to work to combat and eliminate the scourge of drugs. In the same vein, we urge countries in the region to step up their cooperation and coordinate their efforts in cross-border efforts aimed at combating the illicit trade in drugs.

Chad is very concerned about the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) by terrorist groups against civilians, the Afghan security forces and diplomatic and humanitarian staff. To that end, we underscore the need to step up coordination and exchange information, both locally and regionally, so as to prevent parts for IEDs from being delivered to terrorist groups and to better control the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. By the same token, we are extremely concerned by the deterioration in the humanitarian situation, in particular that of persons being displaced because of natural disasters and a lack of security. We urge the international community to urgently provide the necessary assistance to displaced persons, and all donors to contribute to such efforts.

In conclusion, we reiterate our support to the Afghan authorities and urge the international community to further support them in restoring peace and rebuilding the country.

**The President:** I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United States.

Let me begin by again welcoming Ambassador Saikal to the Security Council and to New York. We look forward to working with him and with partners from the various branches of the Afghan Government. I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan, Mr. Haysom, for his informative briefing and for the critically important efforts of the entire United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan team to support the Afghan people.

As we meet today, the Government of Afghanistan continues to face significant challenges in delivering the security, good governance and economic opportunity for which its citizens yearn. Today I wish to speak to some of those enduring challenges and what the

international community can do to help the Afghan Government succeed in its efforts to overcome them.

As we all know, the Taliban and other anti-Government groups continue to pose a serious security threat. In recent weeks we have all been horrified to witness the Taliban's attacks, including the one earlier today on a patrol near the Wagram air base. That follows the raid of 9 December on Kandahar airport and the attack of 12 December in Kabul that targeted a guesthouse attached to the Spanish Embassy. Scores of innocent Afghan civilians have been killed or wounded in those and other attacks, as well as two Spanish police officers who were killed in the 12 December attack and for whose deaths I would like to extend our deep condolences to the Permanent Representative of Spain.

The United States is committed to continuing to help the Afghan people confront this security threat. In October, President Obama announced plans to maintain the current level of 9,800 United States troops in Afghanistan through most of 2016. They will remain engaged, together with those of our allies and partners, in the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission, in training, advising and assisting Afghan security forces. We will continue to support counter-terrorism operations to destroy the remnants of Al-Qaida.

We also continue to support and invest in Afghanistan's relations with its neighbours. In that regard, the recent Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process ministerial meeting on 8 December in Islamabad was a step in the right direction. We welcome the renewed commitments made there to support Afghan-led efforts to enter into negotiations with the Afghan Taliban, and we will continue to work with all countries in the region, including China and Pakistan, to create the conditions necessary for a peace and reconciliation process between the Afghan Government and the Afghan Taliban, including elements such as the Haqqani network. The choice facing the Taliban is clear — to engage in good-faith negotiations for peace, or to continue to fight a war they cannot win and face the consequences. We urge all members of the Council to come together in sending that clear message.

Beyond the region, the international community should continue to provide robust political, financial and security support to Afghanistan. The progress the country has made is real, but it is also fragile, and the Afghan Government and people continue to warrant our firm support. Two major conferences in 2016 — the NATO Summit to be held in Warsaw in July and the

Afghanistan development conference to be held in Brussels in October — provide important opportunities for Member States to renew and extend such support.

As we continue to work to degrade and destroy Afghanistan's violent extremist groups, all parties, including the United States, must ensure that they are doing everything they can to minimize harm to civilians. To that end, I would like to repeat President Obama's heartfelt apology and condolences for the incident in which staff and patients were killed and injured when a United States military air strike mistakenly hit a Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) hospital in Kunduz. When others flee conflict and disaster areas, MSF charges in, and the work its staff does is quite literally lifesaving. We in the Council have been repeatedly briefed by MSF on crises around the world in which the organization's staff and volunteers serve with professionalism and courage. No nation does more than the United States to avoid civilian casualties, but in this case we failed to live up to our standards. President Obama has insisted on a transparent, thorough and objective accounting of the facts and circumstances of the incident as a critical step towards ensuring full accountability. The United States is committed to helping MSF rebuild the hospital and to making payments to those affected.

Immeasurable as is the pain inflicted by that air strike, it is important to distinguish a mistake of that nature from the deliberate and deplorable targeting of civilians by the Taliban and other violent extremist groups. Our message to those forces is clear. There is only one path to peace, security and stability in Afghanistan, and that path is not through military action but through an Afghan-led reconciliation that builds on the democratic and human-rights gains that the country has made since 2001. The Taliban's attacks harm the Afghan people, destabilize the country and betray the group's disregard for the people's lives. They must stop.

As we all know, the efforts of the Afghan Government to build greater security and stability cannot be founded on military efforts alone. Good governance and economic development are critical to shoring up Afghan citizens' support for the Government. In 2014, more than 7 million Afghans, including millions of women, cast their vote in elections, marking the country's first democratic transfer of power in its history. The National Unity Government formed by President Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah

reflects the genuine wish of the people for a peaceful transition. Since then, the Government has made meaningful progress towards building more transparent and accountable institutions that can deliver basic services to the Afghan people. It has also committed to making progress on electoral reform, which is critical to strengthening public trust in democratic processes. The recent recommendations announced by the Special Electoral Reform Commission are a welcome step. It is now up to the Afghan Government to implement those pledges.

We have also seen the Unity Government undertake significant efforts to lay a foundation for sustainable and inclusive economic growth. To give just a few examples, the recent agreement between Afghanistan and Pakistan allowing construction to begin on the Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project will bring much-needed Central Asian energy to both countries. And the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework, which the Afghan Government adopted in September, outlining 39 reforms and a road map for cooperation between it and international donors, could boost crucial support for the country's development. If implemented, those and other efforts will help foster greater opportunities for the Afghan people, and thereby lock in broader support for the country's democratic future.

I would like to close by reminding everyone why it is so important that these efforts succeed. As everyone here knows, on 28 September the Taliban seized the city of Kunduz, which it held parts of until it was fully expelled on 13 October by pro-Government forces. The group's treatment of the local population during that time provides a window into how it would rule were it able to retake control of more of Afghanistan. According to a United Nations report (S/2015/942), shortly after taking control of the city the Taliban carried out house-to-house searches using prepared lists containing the names and addresses of human-rights defenders, particularly women — women active in public life, non-governmental organization (NGO) workers, United Nations staff, journalists and Government officials, including lawyers, judges and prosecutors.

The persecution of women was particularly harrowing. The Taliban looted or burned down three radio stations run by women, a girls' high school and numerous women's NGOs. One of its targets was a women's shelter run by the NGO Women for Afghan

Women, whose residents the Taliban called runaway sluts and immoral girls. The office, a news report said, appeared to have been attacked with sledgehammers, the windows shattered, the walls and door frames smashed. Of the shelter's director, Hassina Sarwari, who managed to escape Kunduz before the Taliban could capture her, the local Taliban commander said: "If we had captured her, she would be hanged in the main circle of Kunduz city". Even the city's only woman civil engineer, whose job it was to help restore roads, was persecuted and run out of town.

Like so many of the women's rights advocates and professional who fled Kunduz and received death threats, Hassina is too afraid to return. Yet the head of Hassina's organization, a woman named Manizha Naderi, said that they would find a way to open a new women's shelter in Kunduz. She said it would be hard to find women willing to go, but that "people need us, so we will have to come up with a plan. If we stop working, it is a big victory for the Taliban".

Groups like Women for Women are not willing to give the Taliban the victory that would come with abandoning Afghans in need. We cannot either.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Germany.

**Mr. Braun** (Germany): Let me join others in thanking Mr. Nicholas Haysom for his comprehensive briefing today. Germany appreciates the outstanding work of United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in leading and coordinating international civilian efforts, including in the promotion of human rights, humanitarian access, counter-narcotics and donor cooperation. We also commend his Mission for its excellent outreach and the good offices provided in support of the Afghan Government.

With the support of the international community, Afghanistan has made great strides over the past 14 years. Life expectancy has increased considerably, the number of maternal deaths has decreased and millions of boys and girls now have access to primary and secondary education. Despite these significant achievements, great challenges remain.

Following the first peaceful and democratic transition of power in Afghanistan's history, the National Unity Government has committed itself to implementing an ambitious and cross-cutting set



of reforms to tackle these challenges. We strongly encourage the National Unity Government to make further progress on this reform agenda. The implementation of difficult economic and political reforms is at the core of the mutual accountability principle that Afghanistan and the international community reaffirmed in Kabul in September. The ministerial conference in Brussels in October 2016 will be a highly relevant milestone in measuring the progress achieved. Afghan ownership and leadership are key prerequisites in the preparation of the conference and will be instrumental in reconfirming the exceptional international commitment to Afghanistan.

The unsatisfactory economic and security situation are the main drivers behind the rising numbers of Afghans leaving their country — young, educated citizens who should be the backbone of their country's reconstruction and development. Halting and reversing this brain drain is first and foremost in the interest of Afghanistan. To this end, it is necessary to provide the Afghan population, especially young people, with the prospect of a future in their own country.

We remain highly concerned over the high number of civilian lives lost due to incessant fighting and the outrageous, cowardly acts of violence and terrorism. We strongly condemn today's attack near Bagram and express our deepest condolences to the families of the victims. I would also like to express our abhorrence at the recent attacks on Kandahar airport and the compound of the Spanish Embassy in Kabul earlier this month. In the face of this difficult security situation, the Afghan National Security Forces have shown remarkable resilience during this first year in which they have carried the full responsibility for their country's security. We deeply deplore the many casualties that they have sustained in their fight for law and order in their country.

The NATO Summit in Warsaw in July 2016 will be an important opportunity for the international community to reaffirm its support for the Afghan National Security Forces. Germany will continue its financial assistance and support in the years ahead. Last Thursday, our Parliament voted to extend our military engagement in Afghanistan as part of the NATO Resolute Support Mission for another year, with a raised troop ceiling of 980 soldiers. In so doing, Germany joins all of Afghanistan's friends and partners in sending a clear message. We will not abandon Afghanistan at this critical time.

The only path to lasting peace and security in Afghanistan is a process of peace and reconciliation among all Afghans. We commend the courageous leadership shown by the National Unity Government and President Ghani Ahmadzai personally during his recent visit to Islamabad. We are encouraged by the commitment of the Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan to promoting an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned political process. We call on all regional actors to lend their active and unreserved support to this effort.

Let me assure you, Madam President, that Germany remains committed to supporting Afghanistan during the current transformation decade, in close cooperation with the Afghan Government and our international partners.

**The President:** I give the floor to the representative of India.

**Mr. Bishnoi (India):** I am privileged to participate in this debate of the Council being presided over by you, Madam. I also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Nicholas Haysom and Ambassador Mahmoud Saikal for their briefings.

We are happy that Afghanistan's historic political transition remains on course. India is proud to call itself Afghanistan's first strategic partner, and stands ready to do whatever is within its capacity and means to work with the Afghan Government and its people to realize our common ambition. We share the Afghan people's desire for a strong, independent, united and prosperous Afghanistan. India will continue to support a truly Afghan-led and Afghan owned reconciliation process within the framework of the Afghan Constitution and the internationally accepted red lines.

During the recently held Heart of Asia ministerial meeting in Islamabad on 9 December, our External Affairs Minister said that

“democracy is taking roots in Afghanistan and we acknowledge the role of President Ghani and CEO Mr. Abdullah in building on the strong foundation created by former President Karzai to ensure peaceful, democratic and inclusive governance for the whole of Afghanistan”.

In that context, we would like to inform the Council that India will be hosting the sixth ministerial of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process in 2016.

Our main concern remains that of the security situation in Afghanistan. The Secretary-General's latest report (S/2015/942) substantiates our view that it is terrorism which is the main source of insecurity and instability in Afghanistan. What is alarming is the revelation in recent reports, including the Secretary-General's report, of the presence of Daesh-affiliated groups, particularly in Nangarhar province. The deteriorating security situation is reflected in the Secretary-General's report, which states that there were 3,693 civilian casualties in the reporting period, reflecting an increase of 26 per cent over the same period in 2014. We strongly condemn the dastardly terrorist attacks on the Kandahar airport and the Spanish Embassy in Kabul on 8 and 11 December, respectively, as well as the attack outside Bagram airbase today. This is indeed alarming, and the Council must act against this threat with a sense of urgency.

We would like to take this opportunity commend the Afghan National Security Forces and the Afghan people for countering the forces of terrorism and extremism with courage and resilience. They need the continued support of the international community to defend Afghanistan's unity and security. For its part, India is ready to work with Afghanistan to strengthen its defensive capability. India has always maintained that any peace talks have to be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned and should only be with those Taliban sympathizers who are willing to accept and work within the Constitution of Afghanistan. .

Afghanistan will be able to achieve its optimal economic potential only if it is allowed freedom of transit to major markets in South Asia. We have formally indicated our willingness to join the Afghanistan-Pakistan trade and transit arrangement. India is also working with Afghanistan and Iran to develop trilateral transit. Participation in the development of the Chahbahar Port will augment our connectivity with Afghanistan and beyond. India's engagement in the trade, commerce and investment confidence-building measure within the Heart of Asia Process as the lead country complements our bilateral development cooperation with Afghanistan, including in the spheres of infrastructure, connectivity and capacity-building.

In conclusion, it is our view that UNAMA must continue to play a leading role in shaping and coordinating the efforts of the international community to support Afghanistan's political and economic reconstruction process.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

**Ms. Bird (Australia):** This Security Council debate comes at the end of a difficult year for Afghanistan. The National Unity Government, under the leadership of President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah, has confronted a determined insurgency, significant economic challenges and the imperative tasks of reform and countering corruption. Progress has been made, but there is much still to do.

Security remains a major challenge, as the brief fall of Kunduz reminded us. The insurgency has continued its horrendous attacks against civilians. The Afghan National Defence and Security Forces remain bravely resolute in their mission to confront the insurgency, and we honour their sacrifices. International forces also face a constant threat of violence. We commend their efforts.

Australia remains committed to assisting the Afghan Government to deliver a secure and stable future for its people. To that end, we are one of the largest donors to Afghan security forces sustainment, providing \$A500 million from 2009 to 2017. Since 2001, over 25,000 Australian personnel have served in Afghanistan, with 250 continuing to serve in NATO's Resolute Support Mission at the current time.

Afghanistan continues to face human rights challenges. Violence against women and children is of particular concern for Australia. Through our aid programme to Afghanistan — Australia's fourth largest at \$A80 million per year, we provide shelter and support to over 2,300 women and children, and training for over 2,800 police- and justice-sector officials to uphold women's rights.

Electoral reform is another area that requires urgent action. We welcome President Ghani's approval of most of the recommendations of the Special Electoral Reform Commission. Implementation must be a priority. Parliamentary elections should be held in a timely manner to meet the expectations of the Afghan people.

Economic reform is key to a brighter future for Afghanistan. The Government's Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework will be an important mechanism to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of donor funding. We welcome President Ghani's vision for Afghanistan's economic future, and we encourage

his Government to persevere in its efforts to combat corruption.

While it has been a difficult year, much has been accomplished in Afghanistan by both the Afghan Government and the international community. Australia recognizes the role that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has played. We applaud the efforts and dedication of all United Nations personnel in Afghanistan. The work of the Tripartite Commission on future priorities for UNAMA provides a useful assessment of the role, structure and activities of all United Nations entities operating in Afghanistan. We look forward to the Council renewing the UNAMA mandate in March 2016 so that UNAMA can continue to play its important role in Afghanistan effectively.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

**Mr. Cardì (Italy):** In the period following the most recent Security Council debate on Afghanistan (see S/PV.7526), the security situation in the country has deteriorated, as highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/942). In recent months, we have seen a further increase in violence by insurgent groups, confirmed as well by data of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) on civilian victims, indicating a 26 per cent increase between August and October 2015, as compared to the same period in 2014. We strongly condemn the most recent terrorist attacks in Kandahar and Kabul, as well as today's attack in Bagram.

The National Unity Government continues its steadfast commitment to combat those aiming to destabilize the country and to foil the progress made in democratic and social sectors, and the achievements on civil rights and on the situation of women in the past 14 years through the efforts of Afghan institutions and the support of the international community.

Italy will continue to support the Afghan Government and institutions, in its commitment to sustaining the country's security and stability and to fulfilling the aspirations of its people for a future of peace and prosperity. Evidence of that is our decision to maintain in 2016, together with our partners, our contribution to the train, advise and assist mission — Resolute Support — led by NATO to continue efforts in strengthening the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces units that are fighting insurgent hostile groups. Italy will also continue to play

its role as framework nation in the western region of Afghanistan.

We are all well aware, of course, as underscored in the General Assembly resolution on Afghanistan adopted in recent weeks, internal reconciliation is paramount to achieve long-lasting peace and stability. Promising signs have emerged from the Islamabad Conference of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, with the high-level participation of the region's main countries, and of President Ghani in particular. Those are positive indications for strengthened cooperation among the region's main actors, particularly Afghanistan and Pakistan, with the support of the international community, in the fight against terrorist groups and in creating conditions that are conducive to resuming the negotiation process between the Government and the Taliban.

Italy supports all efforts and initiatives in that direction, based on closer cooperation among actors that can lead to an internal and inclusive peace process. That entails the rejection of violence; breaking all links with terrorism; and respect for human rights, in particular those of women, whom we hope to see actively participating in future peace negotiations, and of girls.

This year has witnessed a worrying increase in the flux of Afghan citizens fleeing their country because of the worsening security situation.

Self-sustaining development will be untenable without the necessary internal reforms. We reiterate our appreciation for the efforts of the National Unity Government and the plans arranged under its Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework, launched last September. An articulated programme based on indicators and clearly defined timelines is certainly the best premise for any action on reform. But that must be accompanied by effective implementation with measurable results in the areas of political governance, electoral reform, the rule of law, the fight against corruption, economic governance and human rights.

Against that backdrop, priority must be given to the protection and promotion of women's rights, to strengthening women's empowerment in all sectors of society, and to their physical protection — because episodes of violence against them have increased in recent times, as shown by some extremely serious cases, which we strongly condemn. This, despite the

commendable efforts of the Afghan Government, shows how much work must still be done. Of course, we commend the work done by the United Nations and Special Representative Nicholas Haysom.

In conclusion, the hard work of the Afghan authorities and institutions, with the support of the international community, is crucial if the reform process is to achieve its goals of further democratic consolidation and self-reliance. The Brussels ministerial conference of 4 and 5 October 2016, to be co-hosted by the European Union, will be an opportunity to confirm this partnership, which, considering the extraordinary level of mutual commitment between the international community and Afghanistan, must lead to concrete progress in the area of reform.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

**Mr. Munir (Pakistan):** We thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2015/942), as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Nicholas Haysom, for his detailed briefing this morning and for his continued good work in the country.

The one common thread running through the report, the briefing and the statements today is the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan. As the Secretary-General states in his report, the temporary capture of Kunduz by the Taliban was a result of the formidable security, economic and political challenges facing by the country. Continued international support therefore remains critical. Pakistan, for its part, has condemned the violence and rising number of civilian casualties in Afghanistan. Nothing justifies indiscriminate killing. We have vowed our full support to the Government of Afghanistan with a view to improving the situation, but it is the Afghan people itself who must put their house in order.

The two possibilities for ending instability in Afghanistan, in our view, are the military option or the negotiated peace process. There is clear international consensus that the use of force alone may not achieve peace in the country. A robust and meaningful reconciliation process, if pursued seriously, is the only sustainable way to achieve our common objective. It was in that spirit that Pakistan, in good faith and at the request of President Ghani, facilitated the first-ever direct talks between the Afghan Government and the Taliban. We stand ready to play a similar role again.

No one, however, should cast aspersions on Pakistan's sincerity. After Afghanistan, Pakistan and its people have suffered the most from the 35 years of wars, violence and terrorism in Afghanistan. Pakistan is the primary victim of terrorism. Our resolve to root out the scourge of terrorism from our territory is clear and visible. We have targeted, and continue to target, all terrorist groups. We have made substantial progress in cleansing our country of terrorists. However, these objectives will not be fully accomplished until the sanctuaries and safe havens of those terrorists who have fled our operations to Afghanistan have been eliminated. We cannot allow our people to be the target of cross-border attacks launched from those safe havens. When Pakistan initiated its counter-terrorism operation in North Waziristan, we called for coordinated action from Kabul to prevent the escape of terrorists into Afghanistan and their resort to cross-border attacks from Afghan territory. That cooperation is still absent. I would like to reiterate our call for that collaboration. We cannot achieve diplomacy through statements. We have to resolve our issues through dialogue.

The successful holding of the fifth ministerial conference of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, in Islamabad on 9 December, was another manifestation of our commitment to stability and peace in Afghanistan. The conference provided an opportunity for the ministers of the region and beyond to agree on a broad-based Islamabad declaration. We believe that, if implemented with sincerity, it will pave the way for a peaceful neighbourhood, which is a foreign policy objective of Pakistan. The conference was inaugurated jointly by the President of Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani, and the Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif. The two leaders also had a constructive bilateral meeting thereafter, their second in 10 days. The first was in Paris on the sidelines of the Climate Change Conference. A number of Afghan-focused bilateral, trilateral, and quadrilateral meetings were also held in Islamabad. While recognizing Pakistan's role and commitment to facilitate peace talks, those meetings helped to reach consensus on several areas.

First, peace in Afghanistan is vital for the region and beyond. The focus of the international efforts should therefore be on regional and international efforts to achieve peace and stability in the country. Secondly, closer collaboration and coordination between Pakistan and Afghanistan are essential to promote peace in Afghanistan and to effectively combat terrorism. Thirdly, reconciliation through a politically negotiated

settlement is the only viable option for promoting long-term peace in Afghanistan. The Islamabad declaration also commits to the return of Afghan refugees to their homes with dignity and honour, and the international community's support for their smooth resettlement. Pakistan is considering the extension of the tripartite agreement at this stage. That, however, would be with a clear road map to ensure the return of refugees with dignity.

Regional connectivity will be key to the economic development of Afghanistan and the region. The groundbreaking ceremony for the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline earlier this month and the work on the CASA-1000 and other similar projects augur well for that endeavour. The pipeline project alone, for instance, would create tens of thousands of jobs in Afghanistan. We agree with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan that these are the kinds of objectives and activities on which the region should focus its energy.

For decades, the peoples of Afghanistan and Pakistan have confronted the common threat of terrorism. Pakistan has made notable gains in its counter-terrorism campaign through its military operations and the comprehensive national action plan. We sincerely hope that in working together, the two countries will, fulfilling the expectations of their peoples, cooperate closely to defeat all terrorists and establish lasting peace in the region.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

**Mr. Yoshikawa (Japan):** Three years ago in Tokyo, we all agreed to achieve Afghanistan's self-reliance. In the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, the principle of mutual accountability between Afghanistan and the international community was agreed. While Japan appreciates the progress made in various areas of priority, such as counter-corruption and electoral reform, it is disappointing that key positions, such as attorney general and defence minister, have not yet been filled. In view of the spirit of mutual accountability, I strongly hope that the Afghan Government will undertake further efforts in that regard.

As described in the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2015/942) on Afghanistan, Afghan security forces continue to face challenges. Since the last open debate in September (see S/PV.7526), we have seen a series of high-profile security breaches, including the

one in Kunduz — the fifth largest city in Afghanistan. Improving the security situation is the most important prerequisite for the development of Afghanistan. It is crucial that an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace process be advanced. In that context, Japan welcomes the positive outcome of the meeting held in Islamabad in early December. I would like to call upon all stakeholders to move the ultimate goal of peace and reconciliation forward.

When I made a statement on Afghanistan at the Security Council in September, I emphasized the notion of self-reliance. My key word today is again self-reliance. As the former Special Representative of the Government of Japan for Afghanistan and Pakistan, I believe that Afghanistan has great potential to realize self-reliance. Allow me to elaborate by mentioning three areas.

First, the agriculture sector is key to generating jobs and income, with a view to building greater social stability and significantly reducing crime. Dr. Tetsu Nakamura, a Japanese medical doctor, launched an irrigation project in the Gamberi Desert in Nangarhar province in 2003. By utilizing centuries-old traditional Japanese irrigation technology, combined with Afghanistan's own traditional methods, his Green Ground project succeeded in establishing a highly effective irrigation system. With an investment of approximately \$24 million to date, the desert has been transformed into fertile land in the span of 10 years. The Government of Japan has been cooperating with the Afghan Government and other organizations to introduce the same irrigation system in other areas of Afghanistan. Two days ago, on 19 December, Japan announced an agriculture and irrigation project worth approximately \$13.5 million, covering such northern provinces as Kunduz, Baghlan and Takhar. That is one vivid example of Japan's commitment to exploring Afghanistan's potential in agriculture with a view to achieving self-reliance.

Secondly, enhanced regional cooperation, with improved regional connectivity, will provide a stronger foundation for economic growth and self-reliance. Afghanistan is rich in agricultural and mineral resources, but they are not fully accessed or utilized owing to many obstacles. The underdeveloped transportation infrastructure, both within and outside Afghanistan, is one such obstacle. This year, the Government of Japan and the Asian Development Bank jointly promoted preliminary studies on improving interconnectivity

in the region. One such study focuses the feasibility of a railway connecting western Afghanistan to Turkmenistan, which will hopefully open the door to new economic opportunities. Another obstacle is the lack of appropriate border controls. When effectively put in place, border controls greatly enhance regional economic activity. They also help to address the illicit drug trafficking problem and its linkage with terrorist financing. In that regard, Japan has been steadily supporting counter-narcotics measures in the region for the past 10 years, in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries.

Thirdly, human resources can lay the foundation for Afghanistan's economic development and self-reliance, and can enhance the capacity of future Government operations. To give just one example, more than 400 young Afghan Government officials have received postgraduate education in Japan under the Japan International Cooperation Agency's programme for the promotion and enhancement of the Afghan capacity for effective development.

As a member of the Security Council starting in January, we are determined to continue our assistance to Afghanistan so that the Afghan Government can achieve peace, stability and self-reliance. As the Afghan Government implements its commitments on the basis of mutual accountability and makes a crucial transition towards self-reliance, Japan stands ready to offer its support in cooperation with the international community.

Finally, I wish to extend my appreciation to Special Representative Haysom and his team in Kabul for their tireless efforts.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden.

**Mr. Thöresson (Sweden):** Sweden aligns itself with the statement soon to be made on behalf of the European Union. I would, however, like to make a few additional remarks in my national capacity.

First of all, I would like to thank Mr. Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for both his comprehensive briefing on the current situation in Afghanistan and for his tireless efforts. I would also like to thank Ambassador Saikal for his valuable remarks.

It was often said that 2015 would be a critical year for Afghanistan — a year for the implementation of reforms in order to contribute to peace, stability and a brighter future for the Afghan people. As the year draws to a close, we should take this opportunity to reflect on the progress that has been made and on the challenges for the years ahead.

The Afghan Government has taken important steps in pursuing the reform agenda of the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework. Such reforms are necessary in order to achieve the long-term objectives of a self-reliant and prosperous Afghanistan, where women and men, girls and boys, can fully enjoy their human rights. To achieve that, Afghanistan will need continued international support, and to that end, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan will play an important role. I would like to highlight three issues.

First, 2015 has seen an alarming increase in violence throughout Afghanistan, resulting in a significant number of civilian casualties. The attack on Kunduz and the tragic events that followed, including the bombing of the Médecins Sans Frontières hospital and the recent attacks on Kandahar airport and on the Spanish Embassy compound in Kabul, are discouraging examples. The deteriorating security situation has a devastating impact on the civilian population, not least on women and children. Attacks on the civilian population are of grave concern. International humanitarian law must be respected at all times and by all parties, and we welcome investigations that contribute to that end.

Secondly, a peace process remains the only viable option for a prosperous and stable Afghanistan. We would like to commend the Afghan Government for reaching out to all parties in the region. The Heart of Asia Process is crucial in strengthening regional cooperation, connectivity and confidence-building, with the aim of a prosperous Afghanistan and increased regional security. We welcome the latest Islamabad declaration, in particular its wording on regional security cooperation. We would also like to express our appreciation to Pakistan for hosting the ministerial meeting, and we welcome the constructive dialogue with Afghanistan during President Ashraf Ghani's visit to Islamabad. We hope that the agreement to restart peace talks will yield positive results soon and that women will be an integral part of the process.

Thirdly, the increasing number of refugees and migrants leaving Afghanistan — and, not least, the regrettable outflow of young people, who are much needed to rebuild the country — is a matter of serious common concern. It is important to restore hope for a better future for the Afghan people. Peace, stability and improved living conditions will contribute to that aim. The Afghan jobs-for-peace initiative has the potential to contribute to that in a short- and medium-term perspective.

During President Ghani's recent visit to Stockholm, Sweden confirmed its support to Afghanistan through the signing of a bilateral agreement on development cooperation. Our support to Afghanistan remains substantial and long-term, with the aim of contributing approximately \$1.2 billion during the transformation decade. Those efforts will specifically target increasing respect for the human rights of women, as well as the representation of women in every area of society and their access to resources. That is a prerequisite for sustainable development and stability in Afghanistan. Sweden will continue its contribution to developing the Afghan security and defence forces through its participation in the Resolute Support Mission during 2016.

As this critical year draws to an end, several challenges remain, with important milestones ahead, such as the Warsaw summit and the Brussels ministerial conference. The Afghan National Unity Government, although faced with many difficulties, has remained united. That is a reason for hope. It is important that the United Nations, the international community and regional partners continue to stand by the Afghan people and the National Unity Government in their struggle for peace, stability and a vision for a brighter future.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

**Mr. Vrailas:** I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States.

The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

First of all, allow me to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2015/942) on

Afghanistan, issued on 10 December. We are also very grateful to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Haysom for his briefing and commend him and all the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan for their commitment and very hard work to bring Afghanistan onto the path to progress.

Afghanistan has made considerable progress in the political, security, economic and development areas over the past decade. The recently adopted General Assembly resolution highlights many of those advances, for which the Government of Afghanistan and the Afghan people deserve much credit. But the gains made are fragile and major challenges remain.

In our statement at the Security Council debate on Afghanistan in September (see S/PV.7526), we highlighted the role of institutions in Afghanistan and of the new Self-reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework, which provides important benchmarks and timelines for deliverables in key priority areas. That will allow for stepping up the pace of reforms and ensuring more effective implementation and lead to greater aid effectiveness.

As the Secretary-General's report underlines, continuous insecurity threatens the progress made in stabilizing the country and remains a real concern. The past months have seen a new spike in the exodus of refugees and migrants from Afghanistan. It is all the more urgent that the Government of Afghanistan, with the support of the international community and all regional stakeholders, provide for a secure and stable environment. In that regard, we welcome the continued regional presence of NATO's train-advice-assist Resolute Support Mission. In that connection, I would like to express our deep condolences to our NATO and United States colleagues for the suicide attack that cost three NATO soldiers their lives earlier today in Bagram.

It is crucial that the Afghan people can regain confidence in the future. Implementing reforms to create economic opportunities will be as important as improving the State's capacity to deliver basic services, to maintain human rights standards and to agree on credible and timely reforms of the electoral system. We underline the importance of an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned political process of peace and national reconciliation aimed at achieving a sustainable resolution of the conflict and at building trust and stability among all segments of Afghan society.

Insecurity and instability are also fuelled by the illicit production and trafficking of narcotics, which remain an important concern for the European Union and have severe consequences on Afghanistan itself: high consumption rates within the population, the growth of the illicit economy, the corruption of institutions and the financing of international terrorism. The EU welcomes the recent adoption of Afghanistan's national drug action plan and encourages its swift and effective implementation. We encourage the Government of Afghanistan to continue to pursue a balanced and integrated approach, with the full support of the international community and in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other relevant regional frameworks, such as the Paris Pact initiative.

The European Union remains committed to Afghanistan and, as we have already announced, we are honoured to co-host the next ministerial conference in Brussels from 4 to 5 October 2016. Afghanistan will need the ongoing commitment of the international community to continue on the path to sustainability. The ministerial conference will set out the framework for the Government of Afghanistan and donors until 2020, thereby contributing to a stable and reliable environment for Afghanistan to move progressively towards self-reliance and acting as important catalyst for further mobilizing much-needed political and financial support from the wider region, as well as inside Afghanistan, with the help of the international partners. That exceptional level of international support will need to be matched by an equally strong commitment to reform and change by the Government of Afghanistan. The consequences of disengagement, as witnessed in other regions, are stark reminders of the costs we otherwise face.

Respect for human rights, and in particular the situation of women and girls, has advanced considerably in the past decade. That deserves praise. But much remains to be done, which demands continued efforts. The EU welcomes the launching of Afghanistan's national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, for the period 2015-2022. The EU fully supports the National Unity Government in that endeavour and has put in place a special support programme for its implementation. We must protect the gains made by Afghan women since the fall of the Taliban regime, as their active involvement in rebuilding the State remains crucial. With a view

towards enhanced women's empowerment and full and equal participation in all sectors of society, it is crucial that women be actively involved in negotiations on the future of their country.

It is also significant that the recent General Assembly resolution recognizes the risks faced by human rights defenders in Afghanistan. Those individuals, groups and civil society organizations play a central role in protecting and promoting the rights of others, often at great personal risk. The resolution rightly condemns violence against them.

The economic outlook for Afghanistan remains mixed, after impressive progress over the past decade. The sources for aggregate demand will be scarcer in the future, and public investment and services will remain an important driver of growth — and so will the related international transfers. It is all the more critical to further improve the business and investment climate and to foster the development of intraregional trade and infrastructure, which will provide benefits for all countries in the region. We support all efforts at maintaining and improving such regional relations.

There is no alternative to increased regional cooperation in order to break out of the vicious circles of fragility, poverty, violence and extremism — from trade and energy cooperation, to protecting minorities, fulfilling the protection of human rights as well as combating jointly the militant groups that murder indiscriminately with no respect for international borders. All stakeholders in the region will need to invest real political and financial capital to that end. We applaud President Ghani's recent trip to Islamabad on 9 December as an important step towards a closer bilateral relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan. With regard to cooperation within the broader region, the ministerial meeting of the Heart of Asia Process in Islamabad on 9 December sent important and encouraging signs of an improving dynamic in the region, which deserve all our support and help in the coming months. The European Union will be a reliable partner on that path.

In conclusion, it is important that the international community remain strongly committed to supporting Afghanistan towards long-term progress in the country. From our side, we will continue to support the transition process to promote the emergence of a fully self-reliant, peaceful, democratic and prosperous society for the benefit of all Afghans.



**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Mr. Khoshroo** (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to express my appreciations to you, Madam President, for holding this debate on the situation in Afghanistan. I would also like to welcome and thank the Ambassador of Afghanistan for his statement, as well as Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), for his briefing.

As the latest report (S/2015/942) of the Secretary-General suggests, Afghanistan continues to face major security, economic and political challenges. Those challenges, as well as such cross-cutting issues as counter-narcotics, displacement and refugees are interconnected in nature. The continued support of the international community is needed to help the National Unity Government in addressing those challenges, in the framework of the national ownership and leadership of the Government of Afghanistan.

The 19 per cent increase in the number of security-related incidents a compared with the same period in 2014, and the deterioration of security, especially in northern and western Afghanistan, is a matter of concern. The capture of Kunduz and 16 other district centers during the reporting period is another alarming sign that the Taliban and other violent extremist groups are on the rise and threaten Afghanistan and the region. The report of the Secretary General once again refers to the emergence of Daesh and its affiliate in Afghanistan, along with a spectrum of other terrorist and extremist groups. That is another reason for international and regional Powers to support and assist the National Unity Government on all fronts, especially in its fight against terrorism.

Iran condemns all violent attacks committed on the part of the Taliban and all other terrorist groups, as well as any cooperation with them, because we believe that such cooperation encourages them in their odious behaviour and is counterproductive to establishing peace in Afghanistan.

Strengthening regional cooperation is the path to consolidating peace and economic development in Afghanistan. We see the expansion of our political and economic ties with neighbouring Afghanistan as a priority. We see great potential results to explored in

cooperation with Afghanistan, particularly on security matters, counter-narcotics efforts, developing projects and economic cooperation in the fields of infrastructure and agriculture, as well as in finding a durable solution for Afghan refugees.

During the reporting period, the first expert meeting on the Islamic Republic of Iran-India-Afghanistan Agreement on Transit and International Transportation Cooperation was held in Tehran in order to finalize the Chahbahar port facilities agreement between the three countries. Once completed, that port will provide Afghanistan, a land-locked country, with access to international waters and will be very beneficial for Afghanistan's development. The completion of the two ongoing railroad projects from Iran to the Afghan cities of Harat and Farah will also boost economic activity between the two countries and in the region. The official visits of Afghanistan's Minister of Urban Development and Minister of Mines and Petroleum to Iran in October also concentrated on investment and infrastructure issues.

With regard to counter-narcotics efforts, the Secretary-General's latest report suggests a 19 per cent decrease in opium poppy cultivation compared to 2014, but that is mainly attributed to a drop in the opium yield per hectare, rather than to the success in national and international efforts. We are particularly concerned about opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. That phenomenon is due mainly to prevailing insecurity and poverty. It is a real threat to the region and beyond and should be addressed by the entire international community and in a very serious and comprehensive manner, which unfortunately has not been the case. We welcome the regional initiatives taken by the countries of the region, including China, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Iran to that end.

The international community should especially appreciate and support the triangular initiative on cooperation in countering narcotics among Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. That is a useful initiative that will benefit Afghanistan, as well as transit and destination countries, and must be supported by the international community. The strong support and commitment of international donors, the Afghan authorities and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime are essential to deter the menace of drug cultivation and drug trafficking. Narcotics are not only a social and health challenge, but also, and more importantly, a

major source of income for terrorist an extremist group, which is now a top priority for the Council and the international community.

We support the work of Tripartite Commission in planning the voluntary, safe, dignified and gradual repatriation of Afghan refugees, while continuing to support the remaining Afghan refugees through sharing our own community services, such as health care and education. At the same time, we consider the decrease in voluntary repatriation as an important reason to improve living conditions inside Afghanistan in order to reverse that trend. We support UNAMA and the United Nations agencies in their efforts to provide development and reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan through robust regional engagement on issues such as border security, immigration, the return of refugees and drug control measures.

The role of UNAMA should be further streamlined, taking into account the priorities of the Government as the main partner, as well as those of the international donor communities, in order to be able to effectively implement its mandate. We firmly believe that Afghanistan should become the focus of regional and international cooperation, rather than a subject for competition. That is the only approach that will help strengthen peace, security and development in the region.

In conclusion, Iran once again expresses its full support for the promotion of security, stability and comprehensive and sustainable development in Afghanistan and the efforts of the National Unity Government of Afghanistan in that regard.

**The President:** I give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

**Mrs. Pellegron** (Netherlands): The Kingdom of the Netherlands aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his detailed and thorough report (S/2015/942) and Special Representative Haysom for his briefing and for all the hard work carried out by United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in Afghanistan, and, of course, I would like to thank Ambassador Saikal for his informative statement.

The UNAMA report describes an increase in the overall number of security incidents, which have also intensified in nature. That is a worrisome trend. Recent

attacks in Kunduz, Kandahar, Kabul and, just today, in Helmand underline the conclusions of the report that Afghanistan faces ongoing and increasingly pressing security challenges. The Kingdom of the Netherlands stands by the Afghan Government and the Afghan people and offers its condolences for the lives lost in recent attacks, including those of civilians as well as those fighting for the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. The continued support of the international community, including the Kingdom of the Netherlands, remains essential.

The developments, such as those seen in Kunduz, have shown the need to ensure women's protection and their meaningful participation. For that reason, the Netherlands welcomes the implementation of the Afghan National Action Plan for Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and the establishment of prosecution units dealing with violence carried out against women in all provinces.

Lasting peace and stability cannot be established without a regional peace and reconciliation process. That process should be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned, and needs the buy-in of countries of the region whose security is closely interlinked with Afghanistan. I would like to stress that the sincere commitment of the countries of the region is crucial to achieving a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. In that context, we welcome the positive steps that were taken during the recent Heart of Asia Conference held in Islamabad. Apart from the security issues, Afghanistan also faces serious economic challenges. Recent reforms, such as the tax reform, are encouraging. Both the National Unity Government of Afghanistan and the international development partners must remain focused on building confidence in the Afghan economy, including by strengthening the rule of law. The Netherlands will continue to support that effort through contributions to reconstruction programmes, such as the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, but also through the political and economic empowerment of Afghan women.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands has been a long-time partner of Afghanistan, having contributed significantly in the areas of security, justice and development. We are committed to supporting Afghanistan throughout the transformation decade. Therefore, the Netherlands is assessing its post-2016 contributions, which will be made in the context of increased Afghan ownership and leadership. The Netherlands recently pledged to continue to support

the NATO Resolute Support Mission to train, advise and support Afghan security forces and institutions in northern Afghanistan. We also contribute staff to UNAMA and to the European Union Police Training Mission.

The NATO Summit in Warsaw in July 2016 and the Brussels summit in October 2016 will mark significant moments to show our commitment to Afghanistan beyond 2016, be it military, political or through development assistance. It is important that both the international community and the Afghan Government demonstrate their commitment to achieving progress in these fields.

The continued engagement of the international community will remain crucial to safeguarding the progress that has been made. In the years to come the Kingdom of the Netherlands will stand by the Afghan people. We are committed to our partnership with Afghanistan, based on a mature and productive relationship and broad cooperation, focusing on peace, justice and development.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Finland.

**Mr. Sauer** (Finland): I wish to align myself with the statement made earlier by the observer of the European Union.

At the outset, let me thank the Special Representative Nick Haysom for his briefing, and the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and realistic analysis of the situation in Afghanistan.

The situation in Afghanistan remains very fragile. While security is key to stability, it is only one of many challenges that need urgently to be addressed. Economic opportunity and social development are equally important elements of sustainable stability. Job creation is of particular importance. Encouraging the participation of women in creating conditions for security and development should be one of the primary measures in building a stable and just society in Afghanistan.

Civilians, women and children in particular, always pay the highest price in conflicts. We should therefore also give women a voice in designing the peace. We see women's equal and active participation in peace processes as crucial, and we would like to commend the Government of Afghanistan for its launch of the National Action Plan for Security Council Resolution

1325 (2000) on women and peace and security last June. We look forward to the Plan's full and swift implementation.

Finland welcomes continued Afghan efforts in the fields of improving governance, anti-corruption and the rule of law. We encourage the Afghan Government to live up to the commitments in the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework, presented recently by President Ashraf Ghani.

Finland is supporting through participation in NATO- and European Union-led crisis management by providing significant amounts of humanitarian assistance and development aid, as well as cooperation in trade and diplomacy. We recognize that long-term and comprehensive international engagement is essential. In order to strengthen stability and economic development in Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries, we wish also to express our support for regional cooperation via the Istanbul Process.

It remains difficult to make a precise estimate of the mid-term outlook for the development of Afghan society. The most likely path includes gradual progress with occasional setbacks. What ultimately counts is the unity and commitment of the Afghan leadership and its ability to pursue the most urgent reform measures. Finland's role in that process is to remain a steadfast partner of those who advocate such change.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

**Mr. Grant** (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Canada welcomes the latest report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (S/2015/942), which provides a good overview of developments in the country. We wish to thank the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Nicholas Hayom for their ongoing work.

Afghanistan is now one year into its transformation decade, a crucial period for strengthening Afghan security and moving beyond aid dependence through the implementation of the National Unity Government's self-reliance reform agenda. Canada remains committed to working with the Afghan Government to implement its reform agenda and is making significant commitments through 2017. These include \$227 million in bilateral development assistance to support programming in education, health, women's and girls' rights and

empowerment, humanitarian assistance and capacity-building in disaster management.

Social and economic outcomes are improved when all citizens are able to participate in and contribute to the societies in which they live and to have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives. Afghanistan's full potential cannot be fully realized without the participation of all of its people. We therefore call on the Government of Afghanistan to fully implement the law on the elimination of violence against women and to make every effort to ensure the participation of women in all facets of Afghan life. Canada stresses that Afghan laws must offer strong protections for women and girls, as guaranteed by the Constitution and in line with Afghanistan's international commitments to protecting human rights, and in particular to protecting women and girls from sexual and domestic violence and child, early and forced marriage.

*(spoke in English)*

Improved security and stability remain central to the achievement of Afghanistan's long-term economic and development goals. Canada participates in broader NATO-led security efforts by providing \$330 million over three years to help sustain the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. Canada agrees with the conclusion of UNAMA's assessment that the Afghan security forces have stood strong in the face of considerable challenges, but the brief fall of Kunduz and the Taliban expansion in other areas of Afghanistan cannot be overlooked. These are worrying signs of a broader deterioration in the security situation — one made more complex by the entrenchment of affiliates of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. Civilians continue to bear the brunt of the violence, with incidents up 19 per cent this year, including the targeting of United Nations staff and humanitarian workers.

Peace and reconciliation remain a necessary foundation for long-term security, stability and prosperity. Canada supports an Afghan-led peace process and welcomed the initiative in Murree this summer as a first step towards peace negotiations. We were heartened by the Afghanistan-Pakistan talks in Paris, aimed at reinvigorating this process, as well as recent discussions at the Heart of Asia meeting in Islamabad. While peace will not come easily, we are encouraged by these steps and urge further efforts to revive the peace talks.

Terrorism knows no borders. What threatens one state threatens its neighbours, and what menaces its neighbours menaces us all. With this interconnectedness in mind, it is imperative that we work together to confront Afghanistan's security challenges and to ensure that militant groups are not able to exploit areas of instability to gain footholds from which to propagate their violence on a regional or global scale.

Canada recognizes that Afghanistan's long-term economic development requires not only improved security and stability, but also large-scale private sector engagement, a skilled labour force, infrastructure development, enhanced social service delivery and good governance. Canada continues to stand with the Afghan people as they strive for a more secure and more prosperous future for their country. We call on Afghanistan's leaders to redouble their efforts to work collaboratively for and with all Afghans to improve security, bolster democracy and the rule of law, increase transparency and uphold and protect human rights for all Afghans.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

**Mr. Eler (Turkey):** Allow me to thank the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Mahmoud Saikal, for his statement, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Nicholas Haysom, for his briefing.

We welcome the comprehensive report (S/2015/942) of the Secretary-General. Overall, we share the contents of the report, as well as the Secretary-General's observations.

The achievements of the past 14 years in Afghanistan, including in the areas of security, democracy, governance, economic development and human rights, deserve to be applauded. Nevertheless, those achievements are not at a point of no return; many challenges remain. In order to maintain the achievements and to be able to build upon them, the international community's continuing support to Afghanistan during the transformation decade is of the utmost importance.

We appreciate the role played by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in coordinating the efforts of the international community in Afghanistan. Turkey will continue to support the work carried out by UNAMA. Turkey will also continue

its bilateral and multilateral efforts with a view to assisting Afghanistan in overcoming the challenges it faces. We attach importance to the efforts exerted by the Afghan National Unity Government. There may be some areas where the desirable level of success has not been achieved, and which might therefore be subject of criticism by the legitimate opposition. We also believe that such criticism should be expressed with a constructive spirit with a view to strengthening the confidence of the Afghan people, especially in the face of the National Unity Government's fight against terrorism and efforts towards a peace process.

Maintaining security and stability in Afghanistan should remain a key priority. The stability of Afghanistan, and subsequently that of the region, will depend upon improved security. The Secretary-General's report points out to a considerable increase of 26 per cent in civilian casualties as compared to the same period in 2014. Nevertheless, that figure should not be perceived as an indicator to the overall performance of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). While in 2014 the ANSF had the support of the International Security Assistance Force, 2015 has been the first year for them to operate under full security responsibility. The ANSF gained considerable experience in the past fighting season. We are confident that that experience will lead to an enhanced performance in 2016.

The Taliban's temporary seizure of Kunduz constituted a major setback. Nevertheless, on the other side of the coin, the retaking of Kunduz could be seen as a success of the ANSF. We believe that, as the shortcomings of the security forces in terms of equipment, training and operational capabilities are addressed, the ANSF's victories against the Taliban and other armed groups will increase. The success stories of the Afghan National Security Forces would further increase the confidence and hopes of the Afghan people.

Many of the problems faced by the countries of the region — such as terrorism, organized crime and

the illegal narcotics trade — are of trans-boundary nature. Close cooperation among the countries of the region is crucial in tackling those challenges. In that regard, the Istanbul Process continues to serve as an effective cooperation model that is capable of bringing about practical solutions to the current challenges in the Heart of Asia region.

We welcome the recent initiatives to overcome the stagnation in the relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The talks that took place between President Ghani and Prime Minister Sharif on 30 November and 9 December in Paris and Islamabad, respectively, were important. President Ghani's statements following those meetings — that the two countries had agreed to eliminate the terrorist groups who insisted on continuing violence and that the following round of talks within the peace process would likely start within a few weeks — were encouraging. The successful outcome of the peace and reconciliation process is a sine qua non for lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region.

Turkey will continue its support to the Afghan Government in its endeavours towards bringing peace, stability and prosperity to Afghanistan, as long as our help is needed. Turkey's assistance to the Afghan people is the most comprehensive development aid programme directed to a single country throughout its history. Within this aid programme, Turkey has completed more than 800 projects since 2004. The programme will continue in the years ahead with a commitment of \$150 million for the period 2015-2017. As a display of our commitment to the security of Afghanistan, Turkey is one of the four framework nations of the Resolute Support Mission. Turkey will continue its capacity-building programmes, both within the NATO framework and on a bilateral basis with regard to the Afghan National Army and police.

*The meeting rose at 1.35 p.m.*