

Security Council Open Debate on Afghanistan and UNAMA
20 March 2012, Security Council Chamber

Statement by H.E. Mr Araud, Representative of France

I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his briefing. I also welcome Mr. Tanin's presence in the Council. I endorse the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union.

A strategic review of the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has been carried out, and we are entering a new phase of our presence in the country that is now 10 years old. Since the aims and the format of the international coalition in Afghanistan are evolving, it is natural for the United Nations to adapt to the progress made in the transition process, as well as for the progressive handover to Afghan authorities by 2014 of civil and military tasks to be fully reflected in the mandate of the Mission, as Mr. Rassoul requested of the Council in his letter of 1 March 2011 (see S/2011/118, annex). The mutual commitments taken in Bonn for the so-called transformation decade that will follow the transition decade, from 2015 to 2024, have also been integrated, as has the regional cooperation process launched in Istanbul last November.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2012/133) contains recommendations from the comprehensive review of UNAMA's activities in Afghanistan, which was also conducted in response to Mr. Rassoul's request. France fully endorses the three areas identified as constituting the heart of the Mission over and beyond 2014, namely, political good offices, human rights, in particular the rights of women, which must remain a priority, and international aid coherence.

The gradual adaptation of the United Nations presence to those tasks and to the new environment created by the transition process will be the main challenge facing the Special Representative, bearing in mind the implementation of the reforms stipulated in the Kabul process, possible progress in inter-Afghan reconciliation and the development of both the regional context and political dialogue among neighbouring States.

The situation in Afghanistan is volatile and each week seems to provide its share of tragedies. France has, along with many other nations present in the Chamber, made the ultimate sacrifice. At the same time, there are grounds for optimism. Regular contact has been established with the various sectors of the insurgency. We hope that it will lead to a political solution to the current conflict via a peace process led by the Afghan authorities that will unite all sectors of Afghan society.

Secondly, following the attacks targeting Shiites on 6 December 2011, Afghans reacted with a remarkable display of solidarity, thereby illustrating their commitment to national unity.

Thirdly, the security transition is now a reality for 50 per cent of Afghans — as it will soon be for 80 per cent — without deterioration in security in the areas involved.

Fourthly, my Minister has just co-chaired the third Ministerial Conference of the Paris Pact with his Russian counterpart in Vienna.

Finally, security questions were given a boost at the regional level during the Istanbul Conference on 2 November 2011. In that context, we will continue to stand alongside Afghans and our allies for as long as necessary and as long as long as the Afghan Government asks us to do so. It is in that spirit that we will participate in the NATO Chicago summit in May and at the economic conference that will take place in July in Tokyo.

As for France, we will gradually reduce our troop numbers and bring an end to our combat missions in 2013, in accordance with NATO's force planning, while maintaining our trainers beyond 2014. We will continue to work with the entire international community to set up professional, credible and sustainable Afghan security forces. Our commitment alongside Afghans, in particular in civil terms, will be framed by the friendship and cooperation treaty, signed by President Karzai and the President of the French Republic in Paris on 27 January. That treaty will be fulfilled by a significant increase in our civil commitment in the areas of health care, education, agriculture, cultural exchanges, mining resources and infrastructure.

France's only objectives for Afghanistan are for it to achieve sustainable stabilization, eliminate safe havens for international terrorism and for Afghans to gain control of their national destiny. The success of the transformation will broadly depend on the success of UNAMA. We are therefore convinced that the United Nations and, in particular, UNAMA will have a key role to play in Afghanistan in the years to come.