

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

Statement by H.E. Mrs. Smith, Representative of Norway

Let me first thank Special Representative Kubiš for his briefing today and express our firm support to him and the dedicated staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We welcome the renewal of UNAMA's mandate to be adopted this week. The essence of that mandate is political, not technical. As we gradually transfer power from international to Afghan ownership, UNAMA's role as the guarantor of the integrity of the transition process becomes indispensable. UNAMA serves the purpose both of supporting the Afghan Government and of empowering the Afghan people in their tireless efforts to build a peaceful and democratic future.

Good offices and political outreach in supporting an inclusive, Afghan-led process for a political settlement and monitoring human rights remain essential to UNAMA's mandate. It is also vital that the United Nations continue to promote the capacity of Afghan electoral institutions and the integrity of future electoral processes as the key to empowering democratic institutions. Building robust electoral institutions that can hold elections that meet international standards remains a key area of reform. In parallel to assisting with capacity-building and promoting increased aid coherence in international assistance, UNAMA should focus on supporting the Afghan Government in becoming more accountable, transparent and inclusive.

Today's debate takes place during an important transition period for Afghanistan. The security transition is progressing and will be reviewed at the upcoming NATO Chicago summit on Afghanistan in May. Well-performing Afghan security forces are a key to stability and peace. Another equally important factor is the ability of the Afghan Government to properly perform its functions. Progress on good governance, the rule of law and the protection of the human rights of all Afghans is vital to a sustainable security transition and a durable peace. Promoting the accountability of Government institutions, including separation of powers, will be necessary to build a viable Afghan State.

Moving towards transition, it is equally important that efforts to promote human rights also strengthen the Afghan State's ability to fight impunity and protect the rights of its citizens. It is also vital that the necessary monitoring and watchdog functions of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, civil society groups and free media are not undermined. In that regard, we expect that the appointment process of the new commissioners to the Commission will be finalized shortly in a transparent and inclusive manner. Afghan civil society has a crucial role to play, but the Government should also improve its own institution building and internal cooperation.

Afghanistan needs a political settlement that brings the insurgents and key political and social groups, including civil society, on board to address the root causes of the conflict. A political settlement will not be viable unless it is supported by a majority of Afghans across the political and social spectrum. In the long run, the most sustainable basis for a peaceful future is formed by a broadening of the political space. The strengthening of political parties, civil society groups and free media will be crucial, as will the establishment of the rule of law and the fulfilment of the demands of the Afghan people for justice.

Furthermore, all parties must respect the achievements of the past decade, in particular Afghanistan's international human rights obligations and core principles enshrined in the Afghan Constitution. Women's rights and the empowerment of women should be critical elements of the peace process, and must remain on the top of our agenda. Violence against women remains a major challenge, and the legal rights that Afghan women now enjoy need to be protected through the transition. In that

regard, we welcome the Afghan Government's recent publication of its first report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

At the Tokyo Conference in July, we must make progress on the development cooperation with the Afghan Government by making tangible and sustainable commitments based on Afghanistan's own national priority programmes. Norway's development assistance to Afghanistan is long-term and based on mutual promises of governance reforms.

In conclusion, a peaceful and stable Afghanistan depends upon good relations with its neighbours. We therefore fully support the follow-up to the Istanbul process and the regional confidence-building measures that are being developed. Norway strongly encourages Afghanistan and its neighbours to develop and expand political, security and economic relations.