

Security Council Open Debate on UNAMA, March 19th 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Mr. Ružička, Permanent Mission of Slovakia to the United Nations.

Let me begin by greeting all nations and peoples here, including many from Afghanistan, with best wishes for the new year. The Nowruz holiday is always an awakening and a new start, and a moment that brings us into harmony with nature. It is about forgetting the harshness of winter and appreciating the warmth of the sun. And we are very hopeful that its warmth will sprinkle some positive energy on our deliberations today.

I would like to align myself with the statement delivered by Special Representative Ušackas on behalf of the European Union (EU). While we fully support the shared EU priorities in Afghanistan, let me emphasize some points that we see as important.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2013/133). His briefing and the report presented a comprehensive picture of Afghanistan today. We are pleased with the steady progress in the transfer of security responsibility and the growing size of the Afghan National Police and the Afghan National Army. In many areas where Afghan forces have taken the lead, the security transition has been going in the right direction. We welcome the efforts of the Ministry of the Interior aimed at transforming the police from a security force to a service focused on law enforcement and protection. The role of local police is vital, especially in remote parts of the country. But the process of building functional and credible Afghan national security forces must go on. In our view, the main challenge is insider attacks, which negatively affect the overall situation in multiple ways. The Afghan National Security Forces have almost reached the anticipated numbers. Therefore, the focus should now shift to quality, loyalty and professionalism.

While the security sector is on track, it is equally important to focus efforts on the political and economic elements of the transition and to synchronize them with the current plan to hand over full security responsibility to Kabul in 2014. Further progress in reconciliation is crucial to future success. The willingness of some elements of the Taliban to leave the insurgency, join in the dialogue and enter the political process can set a positive example and deserves our support. The peace and reconciliation process must have strong Afghan ownership.

We see the political transition as a possible game changer in Afghanistan's internal dynamics. We believe that Afghans will take all necessary steps towards achieving inclusive, free, fair and transparent elections. Only a legitimate Government will be strong enough to make progress in the areas of security, good governance and development. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) can play an important role in advising on how to proceed efficiently with electoral reforms and broader political outreach to Afghan society. Some fear that, after the international forces have departed, Afghanistan may slip back into insurgency, return to civil war or once again become a hub for terrorism. We should unite our efforts to ensure that we stand firmly side by side with Afghanistan and the Afghan people on that issue. The Bonn and Tokyo Conferences, the NATO, Chicago and Lisbon Summits and other international forums have ensured a strong commitment on the part of the international community that the Afghans will not be abandoned.

We must keep in mind the seriousness of the threat posed by opium production in Afghanistan to the stability of the region and the overall security situation. We welcome the Afghan Government's commitment to combating that problem. However, it cannot succeed alone without regional cooperation and international engagement. We therefore support the initiatives led by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which are aimed not only at eradicating poppy production but also at dealing with related aspects, such as development and law enforcement. It is crucial that

neighbouring countries cooperate and play an active role in that area. In border control, for example, such cooperation is an important factor in eliminating illegal trans-boundary activities, including drug and weapons trafficking, as well as terrorism.

Afghanistan today remains a proud Muslim society with more women now serving in the Afghan National Assembly than in many democracies. Access to education is getting closer to being universal. Under the Taliban, fewer than 1 million children, almost all of them boys, were in school. Now more than 8 million children go to school, and more than a third of them are girls.

In 2001, Afghanistan's gross domestic product was around \$2 billion. In one decade, that number has reached \$20 billion, until now largely thanks to foreign aid. But Afghanistan has the potential to build on that investment. Among the most visible results is the dramatic increase in the use of new technologies and the growth of small and medium-sized businesses.

Under the Taliban, only one tenth of the population had access to basic health care. Now that better health care is generally available, life expectancy has increased from 45 to 62 years for men and to 64 years for women. Improved education, health care and an atmosphere that is encouraging to small and medium-sized business are the cornerstones of sustainable and irreversible development after the military presence has been reduced.

In conclusion, UNAMA is a crucial and irreplaceable actor in Afghanistan, and its role should be extended. In that regard, we appreciate the words of support voiced for Mr. Ján Kubiš for his professional leadership of that challenging Mission. We know that the United Nations and UNAMA will be important players in Afghanistan, particularly after 2014. As time is passing very quickly and there are many challenges, we should start to think and discuss how to adjust UNAMA's post-2014 mandate, which will have to be provided with the proper resources. The United Nations should act and deliver as one. Slovakia will support Afghanistan until 2014 and beyond. While any military support after 2014 will depend on the requirements of the new NATO-led mission after the departure of the International Security Assistance Force, we have made a decision to provide financial support for sustaining the Afghan national security forces at a level of \$1.5 million from 2015 to 2017. Afghanistan remains the top priority of our official development aid.

One of most famous Nowruz traditions among Afghans is to forget and forgive one another's mistakes and to start the new year with new hope and new goals. Only those who do nothing do not make mistakes. Victory gives us joy; defeat gives us experience and strength. They are wise who act and learn how to achieve the new hope that all people in Afghanistan deserve.