

PC.DEL/264/14
12 March 2014



ENGLISH only



Address by
H.E. Mobarez Rashedi
Minister of Counter Narcotics of the Islamic Republic of
Afghanistan
at the 989th Meeting of the Permanent Council
of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
(OSCE)

D R A F T

13 March 2014
Hofburg, Vienna

Address by H.E. Mobarez Rashedi
Minister of Counter Narcotics of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
at the 989th Meeting of the Permanent Council
of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

D R A F T

13 March 2014
Hofburg, Vienna

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Secretary General,
Distinguished delegations,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be part of today's OSCE Permanent Council meeting and I would like to thank the Swiss Chairmanship for the invitation to speak about the achievements made in various areas over the past 12 years in Afghanistan and the remaining challenges we are facing, particularly the menace of narcotics which is inextricably linked with many other threats to our ongoing transition towards a stable, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan.

Mr. Chairperson,

Sadly, I have to start by recalling the sad passing away of the First Vice President of Afghanistan, Marshal Mohamed Fahim, who for years was at the service of the Afghan people and who was a great advocate for regional and international co-operation. I thank all delegations present which have sent their condolences.

Mr. Chairperson,

Afghanistan today reflects the many achievements in numerous areas which have resulted from a continued partnership between Afghanistan and its partners in the international community over the past 12 years.

The adoption of our new constitution in 2004 as an important milestone in the post-Taliban period has paved the way for many democratic gains including the successful holding of two presidential and provincial council elections and two parliamentary elections. In less than a month, our people will go to the polling stations to vote for a new President and new provincial councils members marking yet another democratic achievement which will further strengthen the foundations of our young democracy. The Government of Afghanistan is committed to convening nation-wide, free, fair and transparent elections. Taking this opportunity, I would like to thank the OSCE for supporting the presidential and provincial councils elections in 2014 also by dispatching an Election Support Team (EST) to Afghanistan and let me also to thank all participating and partner States contributing to the activities of the EST.

Mr. Chairperson,

Afghanistan has also witnessed considerable improvement of the situation of human rights and in particular women's rights in the past 12 years. In accordance with the new constitution, a series of laws have been enacted or amended, new policies and plans have been adopted and numerous institutions have been established that have directly or indirectly contributed to the improvement of women's access to education, health, economic opportunities and political participation. Women hold 28 percent of seats in the parliament as well as many key positions within the government including ministerial and diplomatic positions.

Another important area of positive change in today's Afghanistan is media. There are currently over 84 national and local TV channels and 213 radio channels as well as an increasing number of printed media across the country. Additionally, Afghanistan has also seen the rise of a vibrant and strong civil society in the past 12 years.

Our gains in two key areas of education and health are promising. The number of school children has increased from less than 1 million, and male students only, in 2001

to about 10 million today of which 40 percent are girls. Access to health services and a number of other health indicators have significantly improved. Today, more than two thirds of Afghan citizens have well supplied with basic health services, the life expectancy has increased by almost 20 years from 44 to over 60 in the past decade, with child and maternal mortality rates significantly reduced. Our national income per capita has significantly climbed and important sectors, including telecommunication, banking and civil aviation have witnessed unprecedented progress with a key role played by the private sector.

Such achievements would have not been possible without the support and sacrifices of the international community for which we are deeply grateful. Despite such achievements much remains to be done and we still have a long way ahead of us to build a stable, democratic and self-reliant Afghanistan. In order to sustain our achievements, we encourage continued support and increased co-operation. The current year in particular is of utmost importance to us:

Firstly, from the security point of view, the transition of security responsibilities from the international forces to Afghan forces is due to be completed by the end of this year. Despite the increase in the number of the national security forces to 344,500 personnel and their readiness and commitment to provide security and stability across the country, there is still need for continued support by the international community to our security sector in the form of advice, training, equipment and financial assistance in the coming years. This includes the commitments made in the 2012 Chicago Summit.

Secondly, we believe that the solution to the problems in Afghanistan is not solely military, and, as you know, the Government has initiated a peace process. The Afghan Government remains committed to an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process, supported by enhanced regional co-operation and strong international support. As has been stated from the beginning of this process, opposition armed forces wishing to join the peace process must honor the constitution, renounce violence and cut ties with international terrorist groups.

Thirdly, from the economic point of view, Afghanistan is transitioning from aid dependency towards self-reliance. While the Government of Afghanistan is committed to increasing the level of its national income and strengthening good governance, the country will continue to need international assistance in order to carry out its National Priority Programs (NPPs) in the coming years. In this context, the implementation of the mutual commitments made in Tokyo in 2012 will be crucial for the success of our efforts throughout the Decade of Transformation and we are working with our partners to this end.

Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates,

Beside all our historic achievements and relentless determination toward the ongoing transition, we are still facing numerous challenges in our transformation to a stable, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan and I would like to make some comments, in my capacity as the Minister of Counter Narcotics: I will focus on the challenges arising from the menace of illicit drugs, which pose a major threat to the social, political, security and economic stability as well as to public health. Clearly, the problem of illicit drugs contributes to many other problems in the country: it undermines our achievements, poses problems to good governance and criminalizes parts of our economy.

The Government of Afghanistan has remained committed to fight this menace and has taken specific steps on national, regional and international levels:

Our National Drug Control Strategy has been revised and relevant policies in key areas of alternative livelihoods, law enforcement, drug demand reduction, regional and international co-operation and public awareness have been developed, the implementation of which has resulted in considerable achievements.

The drug treatment capacity has increased from 1% to almost 6%; close to 14% of the

total estimated amount of drugs produced has been seized; more than 3000 drug traffickers, including 500 mid-level and 6 high profile traffickers have been arrested over the past years. Various alternative livelihood programs are developed and implemented in key provinces leading to increased legal income of subsistence farmers. We are now focusing on encouraging the donor community to genuinely mainstream counter narcotics in their programs and projects through an integrated approach. The Ministry of Counter Narcotics is also working on drafting a Counter Narcotics Regional Strategy contributing to greater regional cooperation based on the principle of shared responsibility. We will continue encouraging the regional countries and beyond through all the cooperation and coordination mechanisms at various bilateral, trilateral, and regional mechanisms and organizations, including the Istanbul Process for intensified efforts in counter narcotics.

As we have long argued, there is a direct link between narcotics and terrorism as the terrorist networks continue to fund their activities from profits from the production and trafficking of narcotics. Additionally, success in fighting narcotics, a global challenge, will only be successful through a holistic and integrated approach addressing the full chain of cultivation, trafficking of precursors, production, drug trafficking and consumption, based on the principle of shared responsibility.

Afghanistan has significantly benefited from the support provided to our counter narcotics efforts by our key international partners including the United States of America and the United Kingdom in the past 12 years for which we are deeply grateful. We also highly appreciate the support provided by the OSCE toward our counter narcotics efforts in Afghanistan including through various training and capacity building programs for our counter narcotics and law enforcement agencies, including the programmes at the Dushanbe Border Management Staff College.

We thank the 2013 Ukrainian Chairmanship of the OSCE, H.E. the OSCE Secretary General and the Permanent Representative of Canada, as co-ordinator of the OSCE Group of Friends of Afghanistan, for actively engaging OSCE with Afghanistan during

2013, including tireless efforts to produce a Political Declaration in support of Afghanistan at the Kyiv Ministerial Conference, and we appreciate the continued efforts of the 2014 Swiss Chairmanship in this regard.

Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates,

In closing, let me reiterate that as the security, political and economic transitions are continuing in Afghanistan, it is very important that we sustain and strengthen our joint counter narcotics efforts in Afghanistan to address the challenges arising from the global drug problem. It is important to note that post-2014 Afghanistan will not be a source of threat to other countries in the region. Afghanistan has been a prime victim of international crime organizations and in particular of illicit drugs. We will do our part to fight this problem and will be an active partner to all regional and global efforts to combat this menace. Also, we wish to encourage our partners not only to focus on the threats but also on fresh opportunities arising from increased co-operation. If we let the drug producers and traffickers go unchecked, we risk major instability in the whole region and beyond. Let me reiterate that the Government of Afghanistan remains dedicated to increased levels of regional and international co-operation, also in our joint endeavors in countering illicit narcotics, and in this context, we highly value the continued strong support by the OSCE.

Thank you