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AFGHANISTAN, AT THE 2010 ANNUAL SECURITY
REVIEW CONFERENCE**

16 June 2010

**Working Session IV: Threats and challenges stemming from the territory
of Afghanistan and the OSCE's contribution to stability in the region**

Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished Conference participants,

I should like to thank you for the opportunity to share some observations regarding the situation in Afghanistan and to outline the Russian vision of how to normalize the conditions in that country.

For many years Afghanistan has been the focus of world politics and the press. Unfortunately, it has to be said that there is still neither peace nor stability there. What is more, in recent months we have observed an active destabilization of the situation in the previously peaceful northern provinces. Mines and improvised explosive devices have become a genuine curse for the Afghan people, claiming the lives of ordinary civilians across the country each day. Innocent people continue to suffer as a result of erroneous air strikes as well. Most children are deprived of the possibility of attending school normally. Even the few schools that are left are being destroyed in some places, and there are not enough teachers. For example, after a military operation in the community of Marja in the southern province of Helmand, of the 16 schools in the community, whose name is now well known around the world, only one school for boys opened, 8 of the 81 certified teachers returned to work and 350 of the approximately 10,000 children of school age are now going to school.

For many years not a single major industrial or agricultural facility has been built in this war-torn country, and what there is has either been destroyed or is working at only half capacity. In the meantime, Afghanistan has joined the ranks of the world leaders in drug production, resulting primarily in suffering for the Afghans themselves.

I believe that this disastrous situation can be resolved once we recognize that there is no military solution to the Afghan problem. Ultimately, only harmony among the Afghans will return peace to this long-suffering land. The task of the international community, however, is to offer them all possible assistance in creating the conditions for peace throughout the country. In this respect, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)

must carry out its task of combating terrorism, in accordance with its mandate from the United Nations Security Council.

Russia supports the policy of national reconciliation declared by President Hamid Karzai. We agree that many of those involved in armed opposition against Kabul should be enabled to return to peaceful life if they observe certain conditions. However, it would be very dangerous to accelerate this process artificially. This is especially true with respect to reconciliation with the highest ranks of the armed opposition. The ensuring of security, economic growth and the development of the education system are all vital for the success of this policy. Bribing militants and creating temporary jobs will not solve this problem.

We welcome the commitment to basic principles for the implementation of the national reconciliation process, primarily concerning the satisfaction by members of the armed opposition of the requirements by the Afghan Government with respect to their rejection of violence and the severing of ties with Al-Qaida and other extremist groups expressed in the final resolution of the recent peace council in Kabul. We support the determination set out in that document to implement the policy of “Afghanization” of the stabilization efforts in Afghanistan with a view to increasing the combat efficiency of the country’s armed forces and transferring to them responsibility for the conduct of counter-terrorism operations, as set out in the Communiqué of the International Conference on Afghanistan held in London. However, the creation of an effective army takes many years and hastily urging this undertaking on with artificial deadlines would make it impossible to train strong officers, without which there can be no army.

It stands to reason that the launch of the national reconciliation process in no way lessens the significance of maintaining an effective United Nations Security Council sanctions regime as a very important instrument for counter-terrorism and counter-drugs co-operation with respect to Afghanistan. We firmly believe that the policy of isolating extremist leaders must be systematic and targeted, all the more so since the attack on the site of the peace council on 2 June once again demonstrated that these people are striving in every way possible to wreck Afghanistan’s progress towards peace and stability.

The peace council resolution called on the international community to prevent Afghanistan from turning into an arena for regional confrontation. We believe that the restoration of the country’s neutral status under United Nations Security Council guarantees once the international stabilization efforts have been completed in Afghanistan would assist in this task. It goes without saying that Afghanistan must itself initiate this step. Afghanistan was in fact a neutral State for most of its recent history.

We believe that the world community, including ISAF, is right in its intention to reinforce military efforts in Afghanistan with appropriate civilian efforts. However, these civilian efforts, primarily with regard to the socio-economic revival of the country, must be co-ordinated between the donors and with the Afghan Government. Just give it some thought – around 35 billion dollars have been allocated to Afghanistan over the last nine years. What is the performance index here? How many of these projects have actually achieved their goals or yielded any kind of return? No one has made the calculations as yet, but the visible results fail to impress.

Co-ordination is the key to the success of economic assistance for Afghanistan, and this key must lie with the United Nations in the person of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan headed by him. We support the request by the Afghan Government for no less than 50 per cent of international aid to be provided through the national budget. How can one demand efficiency from a government that is not in charge of most of the funds entering the country? This also relates to the question of corruption, which, undoubtedly, has flourished in the State structures. President Karzai is demonstrating a readiness to combat this evil, but the existence of parallel and not always transparent arrangements for the direct financing of ministries, governors and other authorities from abroad is not helpful in this matter. Here donors and sponsors must recognize their share of responsibility as well.

We must all help Afghanistan in combating drug production. In view of the scale of the problem, it is clear that efforts by the Afghan Government alone will not be sufficient. There is a need for joint action on the part of the global community under the auspices of the United Nations and with the active involvement of all interested States and international and regional organizations, including NATO, the OSCE, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). The creation of a broad anti-drug coalition, with the involvement of civil society institutions in addition to the aforementioned bodies, would be in keeping with these goals.

At the international forum held in Moscow last week entitled “Drug Production in Afghanistan: A Challenge to the International Community”, Russia submitted comprehensive proposals to counter the spread of Afghan heroin. In particular, they focused on increasing the attention paid by the United Nations to the problem of countering the global drug threat, primarily stemming from the territory of Afghanistan, the co-ordinated implementation of programmes for Afghanistan’s economic development, the destruction of opium poppy crops with the parallel implementation of programmes for alternative development, greater involvement of ISAF in combating the Afghan infrastructure, the development of co-operation among the law enforcement authorities of the region, including the exchange of operational and other information concerning illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and precursors for their production, and the continuation of projects to train staff for anti-drug services in Afghanistan and other countries of the region.

We support the development of the OSCE’s co-operation with Afghanistan on the basis of the relevant decision adopted at the Ministerial Council meeting in Madrid in 2007, including assistance in strengthening the borders of Afghanistan’s Central Asian neighbours and the training of Afghan border guards, customs officers and drug police at specialized centres in OSCE countries. We shall continue the implementation of the project to train Afghan drug police at the centre in Domodedovo. Furthermore, we are in favour of stepping up the OSCE’s contacts with the SCO and the CSTO with respect to Afghanistan.

At the same time, we remain firm in the belief that it makes no sense to launch OSCE project activities in Afghanistan itself, including its northern provinces. We take the position that in view of the increasing activities in those areas of extremists, who make no difference in the selection of their targets between foreign servicemen and women and civilian specialists, it would be extremely difficult to ensure the safety of OSCE personnel.

When he met with President Karzai on the margins of the recent SCO summit in Tashkent, the President of Russia, Mr. Dmitry Medvedev, stressed: “we should like to see

Afghanistan as a developing stable State, where rights and freedoms are ensured and where life and other normal standards are guaranteed for all Afghans. We are ready to do all we can to help Afghanistan achieve these goals.”

In addition to providing humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people and writing off more than 10 billion dollars of Afghanistan’s State debt, Russia is ready to participate in the restoration of major industrial and agricultural facilities built in Afghanistan during different periods with the assistance of our country. The training of Afghan specialists is particularly important. This year, Russia has made available 100 grants enabling Afghan students to study at our universities. Furthermore, each year 225 law enforcement officers from Afghanistan study in our country. We are also providing assistance to various Afghan institutions for further and technical education. We are ready to co-operate with other countries and international organizations on these matters.

Thank you for your attention.