Declaration by the Heads of State and Government of the Nations contributing to the UN-mandated, NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan

20 Nov. 2010

Introduction

1. We, the nations contributing to ISAF, reaffirm our enduring commitment to Afghanistan's security and stability, which are directly linked with our own security. We remain resolute in supporting Afghanistan as its security institutions take on increasing responsibility. Today we recognise the progress that has enabled this evolution toward transition and durable partnership, while we continue our efforts to counter those who aim to destabilise Afghanistan. Our UN-mandated mission in Afghanistan, which is at the request of the Afghan Government remains the Alliance's key priority. It is helping to lay the foundations for long term security, stability and prosperity in an Afghanistan respectful of human rights, that will never again become a safe haven for terrorists and terrorism. We confirm our shared long-term commitment and our support for enhanced Afghan leadership, a comprehensive approach, and strong regional engagement as set out in our Strategic Vision at Bucharest and reaffirmed at Strasbourg/Kehl. We pay tribute to those who have lost their lives and recognise the enormous sacrifices of all those working to make that vision a reality.

A New Phase

2. Achieving success is a long-term joint endeavour in partnership with the Government and people of Afghanistan. While Afghanistan still faces significant security, political, economic, and development challenges, together we have created new momentum. Based on the progress we have made, ISAF and the Government of Afghanistan are entering a new phase of our joint effort, which allows us to:

    - help set the conditions for irreversible transition to full Afghan security responsibility and leadership. The process of transition in some provinces and districts is on track to begin in early 2011, following a joint Afghan and NATO/ISAF assessment and decision. We reaffirm our support for President Karzai's objective for the Afghan National Security Forces to lead and conduct security operations in all provinces by the end of 2014.
    - strongly welcome the long-term partnership that has been announced today between NATO and Afghanistan, which demonstrates that the Alliance's commitment to Afghanistan will endure beyond ISAF's current mission and is intended to be consistent with broader international efforts under UN leadership. This will contribute to a long-term international commitment to help Afghans build the capabilities to manage the challenges they face.

Comprehensive Approach

3. ISAF's mission is part of the wider international community effort. We recognise that success cannot be achieved by military means alone and we will contribute to the increased coordination among key international stakeholders in Afghanistan, working in a

comprehensive approach involving both civilian and military actors. We are doing so in a way which respects Afghan sovereignty, identity and culture. We stress the importance of civilian contributions in support of the Afghan people and encourage additional investments in civilian capabilities and resources.

Transition

4. At the London and Kabul conferences earlier this year, the international community affirmed its support for and focus on the sustainable transition to greater Afghan security responsibility. We welcome the joint commitments made and the emphasis on increased Afghan leadership and ownership underpinned by the Kabul Process, the launch of which has been a landmark event. Transition will be conditions-based, not calendar-driven and will not equate to withdrawal of ISAF-troops. To support this, we are: jointly carrying out the agreed process of Inteqal (transition); better aligning our assistance with Afghan national priority programmes; and working through increasingly capable Afghan institutions. As transition proceeds, we will adjust our profile and configuration, reinvesting some of the transition dividend, as necessary and as appropriate, to meet critical security, training and mentoring requirements. We will further strengthen Afghan security capabilities as we gradually move away from combat to an increasingly supporting role. The international civilian effort, including the work done in nationally-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams, should also continue to evolve and enable greater Afghan capacity and leadership and prepare for longer-term development assistance. The UN and other international actors have a key role in this process.

Security challenges

5. Despite a persistent insurgency, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) have increasingly taken the lead in joint operations in the most challenging areas. They have performed commendably, particularly in providing security for two nationwide elections. We have increased the size of ISAF to more than 130,000 troops from 48 nations, including vastly increasing our training and capacity-building of the ANSF, notably through the NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan (NTM-A). Further building up the strength**,** equipment and capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces – which are improving in quality and are on track to reach around 300,000 by the end of 2011 – is at the core of our mission and is essential to a sustainable transition. In that regard we welcome contributions made by individual nations that have enabled us to successfully meet ISAF's current priority requirements for trainers, but underline that further requirements exist for the near future. We are therefore committed to meeting the challenge of filling the requirements for trainers, mentors and critical enablers for 2011 and beyond.
6. We will continue to assist the Afghan authorities in providing security and stability. ISAF and Afghan operations, are improving security and freedom of movement throughout Afghanistan including in the south where the insurgency is particularly active. They are helping create the conditions for the Government of Afghanistan to improve governance, deliver basic services, and promote licit economic activity. Afghan-led counter-narcotic efforts also continue to show positive results.
7. Any civilian casualty is a tragedy. We strongly condemn the intentional targeting of civilians by insurgents, who have caused the overwhelming majority of civilian deaths and injuries in Afghanistan. At the same time, we will continue to take all necessary steps to shield civilians from harm, measures that have already contributed to a substantial decrease in civilian casualties caused by ISAF and Afghan forces.

Reconciliation and reintegration

8. The inter-related processes of reconciliation and reintegration are a key part of achieving lasting stability in Afghanistan. We welcome Afghan-led initiatives particularly the consultative Peace Jirga, the efforts of the High Peace Council, and implementation of the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program. We will continue to support Afghan-led efforts to reconcile and reintegrate those members of the insurgency who renounce violence, cut links with terrorist groups, and accept the Afghan constitution. We also stress the importance of Afghanistan standing by its Constitutional and international obligations on human rights, particularly regarding the rights of women, and the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

Governance

9. The recent Parliamentary elections represented an important step in Afghanistan's democratic development. We urge the Afghan government to continue implementing electoral reforms in line with its Kabul conference commitments. We commend the steps taken by the Afghan government to improve national and sub-national governance on the basis of commitments made at the Kabul conference. However, corruption remains a central challenge to be addressed. We stress the importance of full implementation of the Kabul commitments and continued efforts to improve governance, strengthen the rule of law, and ensure sustainable economic growth. This will help translate security gains into political gains and promote stability.

Regional issues

10. We recognise that many of Afghanistan's challenges cannot be addressed without the constructive support of Afghanistan's regional partners. Enhanced regional co-operation is essential for lasting stability and is most effective when it is regionally-owned, and pursued in a transparent and constructive manner. We welcome various initiatives in this regardincluding the most recent Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan. We recognise the importance of the International Contact Group and its efforts to strengthen civilian programmes in Afghanistan, as well as efforts under the Ankara Process and G-8 initiatives aimed at intensifying cooperation and dialogue between Afghanistan and Pakistan. We support Afghanistan's ongoing efforts to further enhance relations with its regional partners, including Pakistan, recognising the intertwined nature of security challenges faced by both countries. We encourage further efforts to this end.

A shared vision

11. We welcome the participation of President Karzai, the United Nations Secretary General, the European Union, the World Bank, and Japan, at this Summit, all of whom share a vision for a better future for Afghanistan.
12. Many challenges lie ahead. Our strategy is sound and our long term commitment is solid. We will remain united and build on the clear progress achieved to date and demonstrate our resolve to see our mission through. The well being and security of the Afghan people and our own requires nothing less.