

United Nations



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Executive Office of the Secretary-General
Cabinet du Secrétaire général

! URGENT

To: DSG,

Please find attached for your approval, the draft report to the Security Council on the situation in Afghanistan pursuant to SCR 2145(2014). The SG's report was submitted late to EOSG but is due to be issued by CoB, today (27 February).

In sum the main points of the report are that progress in the area of peace and reconciliation has been minimal; although the security transition to Afghan forces has now been concluded, the security situation remains volatile as well. The human rights situation remains worrisome with 2014 reflecting an increase in civilian casualties of more than 20% from 2013. (NB the report includes an annex which evaluates progress against benchmarks in the implementation of UNAMA's mandate and priorities).

The Observations note that the mandate is due to be considered in March and, therefore, includes a request for the renewal of the mandate largely on existing terms.

Received in ODSG

27 Feb 2015

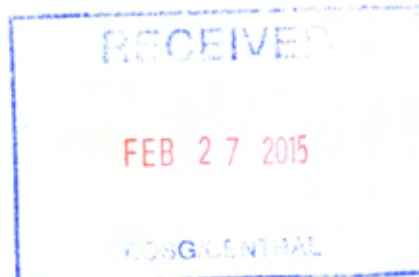
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Political Unit
27 February 2015

15-01543



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Note to Mr. Eliasson

**DRAFT REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE
SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN**

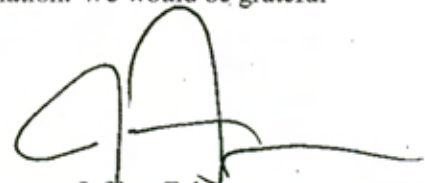
1. Please find attached, for the Secretary-General's approval, the draft report to the Security Council on the situation in Afghanistan to be submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2145 (2014), in which the Council extended UNAMA's mandate until 17 March 2015 and requested the Secretary-General to report on developments in Afghanistan every three months. This will be the final report before the mandate renewal in March, and in line with resolution 2145, the draft includes an annex evaluating progress against benchmarks in the implementation of UNAMA's mandate and priorities.
and
2. The draft provides an update on the situation in Afghanistan since the last report of the Secretary-General of 12 December 2014, presenting key political and security developments, as well as progress on human rights and the humanitarian situation. The report focuses on the continued formation of the National Unity Government, noting that progress has been slower than anticipated. Similarly, the lack of significant progress on electoral planning or reform by the Government, which is called for under the agreement on the National Unity Government is also referenced. Progress on peace and reconciliation has been minimal, despite the efforts of the Government and some heavily conditional statements by the Taliban. The report highlights that although the security transition to Afghan forces has now been concluded, the security situation remains volatile, which increased incidents throughout the winter period. Particular note is made of the challenging economic situation in the country and the need for the government to address corruption and strengthen civil society links. The human rights situation remains concerning, with 2014 indicating an increase in civilian casualties of more than 20 per cent from 2013.
Wansan
3. The Observations section notes the ongoing government formation process and encourages all parties to work closely together to finalise the issue, and notes the need for progress on electoral reform issues. Counter-narcotics is raised as an issue of concern, and it is worth noting that it is an area of particular interest for both France and Russia. The Observations reference that the mandate is due to be considered and requests the Council renew the mandate largely on the existing terms.
4. The date of the Security Council debate on Afghanistan has not yet been set due to continued consideration by France who have the Presidency in March. It is possible the debate will be scheduled for either 6 March or 16 March. Regardless, the Secretary-General's report is due to be issued on 27 February. As per standard practice, the text of the report (minus the observations) has been submitted for advance translation. We would be grateful for its early approval.

RECEIVED

FEB 23 2015

15-01543

EXECUTIVE OFFICE
OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL


Jeffrey Feltman
20 February 2015

cc: Ms. Malcorra
Mr. Khare
Mr. Ladsous

POL/04/006

Jan Eliasson

Date:

Feb 27, 2015

**Draft Report of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan
February 2014***[Word count: Approx 8,432 including titles etc excluding Annex]***I. Introduction:**

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/11 and Security Council resolution 2145 (2014), by which I was requested to report every three months on developments in Afghanistan.

2. The report provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Afghanistan, including significant humanitarian, development and human rights efforts, since the issuance of my previous report, of 9 December 2014 (A/69/647-S/2014/876). It also provides a summary of key political and security developments and regional and international events related to Afghanistan. The annex contains an assessment of progress made towards benchmarks and indicators since the issuance of my report of 7 March 2014 (A/68/789-S/2014/163), in line with Security Council resolution 1868 (2009).

II. Relevant Developments

3. Following the agreement of 21 September last year to establish a National Unity Government by President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah, new ministers assumed the portfolios of Foreign Affairs, Interior and Finance, among others, while discussions continued on remaining appointments. The discussions on the reform agenda outlined at the London Conference on 4 December continued between the Government and its international partners. The passage of the national budget provided the framework for promoting socio-economic stability. Increased emphasis on regional dialogue resulted in a series of developments in the areas of trade and security cooperation. Efforts by the Afghan Government to initiate a sustainable dialogue on peace and reconciliation were stepped up albeit with some limited progress. The security transition to Afghan forces formally concluded on 31 December of 2014 at the end of the mandate of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force. The volatility of the security situation continued to be reflected in the growing human cost of the conflict in terms of civilian casualties and population displacements throughout the year.

A. Political Developments

4. The formation process of the National Unity Government dominated the reporting period. President Ghani introduced a number of interim measures to ensure continuity in governance until appointments are finalised. On 1 December, a Presidential decree was issued stating that Provincial Governors and Provincial Chiefs of Police retained their posts in an "acting" capacity while all sitting Ministers were removed and Deputy Ministers temporarily assumed these positions. On 13 December, a Presidential Decree was issued that set forth the duties and authorities of the Chief Executive Officer including chairing the Council of Ministers, following up on resolutions of the Cabinet, providing policy and reform advice to the President, and proposing appointments and dismissal of high-level officials. On 20 January, a Presidential Decree specified the committees and institutions that the President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, and Special Representative of the President on Reforms and Good Governance would each oversee. During the reporting period, President

Ghani visited all provinces to review the situation first-hand, and reshuffled leadership positions in a number of provinces, including Herat, Farah and Kunduz.

5. On 20 January, President Ashraf Ghani introduced 25 nominees to the lower house of the National Assembly for ministerial positions, as well as candidates to head the Central Bank and the National Directorate of Security. Of the former, 13 were nominated by the President and 12 by the Chief Executive Officer, among them three women. President Ghani had previously announced that no former ministers or current members of parliament would be considered, meaning that the nominees consisted of a number of new political faces. No former commanders from the mujahidin-era were nominated for ministerial positions. A total of nine candidates either withdrew or were rejected by the lower house during the review process. On 28 January, 19 nominees, including two replacement nominees, were put to a vote. As a result, the following nine appointments were confirmed; the head of the National Directorate of Security and eight ministers (Foreign Affairs; Interior; Finance; Public Health; Refugee and Repatriation; Mines and Petroleum; Rural Rehabilitation and Development; and Haj and Awqaf). The remaining ten were rejected, including the only female candidate. As a consequence, acting Ministers continued in seventeen portfolios as well as an acting Governor at the Central Bank.

6. The potential date for parliamentary and district council elections, as well as electoral reform, have yet to be determined. According to the Constitution, parliamentary elections are mandated 30-60 days before 21 June 2015. District Council elections have never been held. On 27 January, the Chairman of the Independent Election Commission publicly proposed 3 October 2015 to hold both sets of elections. The lower house of the National Assembly discussed amendments to the Law on Structure, Duties and Authorities of the Independent Election Commission and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission, but did not vote on the matter prior to its winter recess on 28 January. The proposed amendments included the appointments mechanism for electoral management bodies, the terms of commissioners and key secretariat positions; the duration of the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission, and the lines of accountability for the institutions. On 5 February, President Ghani released a press statement reiterating his commitment to electoral reform and tasked Second Vice-President Mohammad Sarwar Danish to identify areas for improvement with the Commission and civil society. Two days later, Vice President Danish told election observation groups that the Electoral Reform Commission would soon be formed in accordance with the agreement to form a National Unity Government.

7. Under the Constitution, the upper house of the National Assembly consists of one-third of members who are nominees of the President, one-third who are elected by Provincial Councils from among their own membership and one-third from District Councils' members. On 10 January, President Ghani swore in 32 new senators to the upper house from their respective provincial councils with the exception of Khost and Uruzgan, who had not selected their representatives at that time. On the same day, Provincial Council representatives who have been temporarily serving in the vacant district council seats in the upper house were requested to vacate the seats until such time that District Council elections take place. The 34 nominees appointed to the Upper House during President Hamid Karzai's tenure remain in place.

8. On 28 January, the lower house of the National Assembly passed an amendment to the Provincial Councils Law, removing oversight powers of the Councils over the local government line departments. In protest, 32 of the 34 Provincial Councils closed their offices.

President Ghani has since met with Chairpersons of the Provincial Councils and has tasked the Independent Directorate for Local Governance to recommend new amendments to be introduced to the National Assembly that create mutual accountability between the Provincial Councils and the local authorities.

9. President Ghani has placed considerable emphasis on achieving national reconciliation through a formal Afghan-led process in which he foresees a role for the traditional jirgas. He has welcomed and stressed the potential role of China in support of the Afghan peace process. In reaction, a 14 January statement published on the Taliban's website stated that the movement "wanted peace" provided its pre-conditions are met. This included the end of the foreign military presence, the establishment of an Islamic Government and the implementation of Sharia law. On 27 January, the Taliban issued a statement clarifying that a recent visit by its representatives to Beijing was not an effort to seek a mediation role for China.

10. In promoting a rights-based approach to a durable peace process, the Afghan People's Dialogue on Peace held a national conference in Kabul on 15 January. This marked the completion of the second phase of the Dialogue, an inclusive civil society-led peace initiative conducted over the past three years with UNAMA's facilitation that engaged 6,000 Afghans in identifying local drivers of conflict and developing local roadmaps for peace. On 26 January, the Head of the High Peace Council Joint Secretariat met female members of Provincial Peace Committees from 15 provinces to discuss means of accelerating peace efforts in their respective provinces. The joint secretariat of the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme, reported that a total of 1,716 individuals had joined the programme in 2014.

B. Security

11. The security transition was formally completed on 31 December 2014. On 28 December, in Kabul, a ceremony was held to mark the conclusion of International Security Assistance Force operations. Afghan forces assumed full responsibility for security and the new NATO-led Resolute Support Mission commenced. As set forth in Security Council resolution 2189 (2014), the new NATO non-combat, training, advisory and assistance operation will work in close coordination with the Government of Afghanistan and will initially operate from Kabul and four regional locations; Kandahar, Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif, and Jalalabad.

12. The security situation in Afghanistan remained volatile. The United Nations continued to monitor security-related events relevant to the work, mobility and safety of civilians across the country and having an impact on the delivery of United Nations-mandated activities and programmes. In 2014 there were 22,051 recorded incidents which surpassed that of 2013 by 10 per cent. In terms of incidents recorded over the last 13 years, 2014 was the second highest to 2011. Of those incidents, 68 per cent were recorded in southern, south-eastern and eastern regions with Nangarhar Province being the most volatile, recording 13 per cent of the incidents. Armed clashes and improvised explosive devices accounted for 76 per cent of total incidents, an increase of 11 percent from 2013. The use of suicide attacks accounted for less than one per cent of all incidents recorded, though the 158 recorded attacks in 2014 represented a 47 per cent increase compared to 2013; 31 were in Kabul compared to 18 in 2013. The Afghan National Security Forces took counter measures to thwart the efforts of anti-Government elements to challenge control of a number of key

districts and significantly disrupt the elections held in April and June 2014. However, the rise in the overall number of security incidents recorded indicates a mounting challenge to the Afghan security forces from insurgent groups. Unconfirmed reports of significant casualties amongst anti-Government elements as well as Afghan forces points to the increasingly attritional nature of the conflict. This has been particularly evident in areas such as Badakhshan, Kunduz, Hilmand, Nangahar, Kunar and Nuristan provinces, which are also closely associated with illicit economic activity, notably illegal narcotics production and trafficking.

13. Between 16 November 2014 and 15 February 2015, 5,075 security-related incidents were recorded across the country by the United Nations. This represented a 10.6 per cent increase against the same period in 2013/2014 and a 33.2 per cent increase against the same period in 2012/2013. The continuing high level of security incidents is partially attributed to an increase in anti-Government element activities especially during the November and December 2014 period. The months of December 2014 and January 2015 also witnessed the highest number of security incidents when compared with the same period each year since 2001. This is attributed in part to a relatively mild winter that has allowed all parties in the conflict to continue to conduct operations. The Afghan security forces initiated extensive clearance operations in Kunduz and Hilmand over the winter to respond to insurgent activity. Afghan security forces also continued operations in Faryab, Herat, Kandahar, Nangahar and Kunar provinces to counter insurgent groups who continued to contest control of areas over the winter rather than withdraw until the spring offensive commences. Following the spike in insurgent activity in Kabul during October and November 2014, operations by the Afghan security forces supported by the international military contributed to reducing the number of high-profile insurgent operations in the capital, resulting in a decrease of suicide attacks from 10 during October and November to five during December and January. Decreases were also recorded in Kabul for the improvised explosive device attacks, with 18 in the October and November period to five in December and two in January.

14. During the reporting period there were also over 50 demonstrations – nearly all of which were peaceful – country-wide in response to the publication of cartoons considered as blasphemous to Islam. Consistent with previous trends, armed clashes continued to account for the majority of security incidents at 46.8 per cent, followed by improvised explosive devices (30.9 per cent). Targeted killings continued at a high level. From 16 November 2014 to 15 February 2015, 191 assassinations and 40 attempted assassinations were recorded, representing 26.4 per cent and 29 per cent increases respectively against the same period in 2013/2014. A major spike in suicide attacks was also recorded. A total of 40 suicide attacks compared to 35 in the same three-month period in 2013/2014. On 29 January, an improvised explosive device killed an Afghan Local Police commander in Laghman Province and a follow-up suicide attack on the commander's funeral held on the same day resulted in the death of 15 people, including a number of senior local Afghan security force personnel, and 34 reported casualties. On 12 February, a member of the High Peace Council, Haji Sherin Agha, was assassinated by unknown gunmen as he attended prayers in a mosque in Kandahar.

15. During the reporting period, there was speculation in the media about the presence of groups linked to the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL). A handful of Afghan and Pakistani Taliban commanders are confirmed to have declared allegiance to ISIL and an increasing number of commanders are reportedly seeking funding from and considering cooperation with ISIL. There is no indication of widespread or systematic support for or

accommodation of ISIL in Afghanistan. The Government of Afghanistan has indicated the seriousness with which the threat of ISIL is being taken and its intent to curb the growth of the group in the country. The principal security challenges from insurgent groups remain the Afghan Taliban and other experienced insurgent entities notably the Haqqani Network, the armed faction of Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan affiliates and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, particularly in the east of the country.

16. During the reporting period, 25 incidents recorded were either directly or indirectly against the United Nations. The majority of incidents were criminal acts directed towards national staff, including six cases of intimidation and one case of abduction. Seven United Nations road missions came under attack during the period in Khost, Laghman and Jalalabad Provinces on 3, 17 December and 14 January respectively and in Herat Province on 11, 18 and 29 January and 2 February. No United Nations casualties were reported in any of the incidents.

C. Regional Cooperation

17. The new administration continued to pay vigorous attention to enhancing regional engagement. This was manifest in a series of visits to and from neighbouring countries and cooperation agreements, such as the one signed during President Ghani's January visit to United Arab Emirates in mid-January, when the Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement was concluded between the two nations. On 20 January, the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs visited Kabul. Among other issues, the Afghan leadership discussed security cooperation and a proposed Bilateral Strategic Cooperation Agreement. This visit was preceded by the 15 December signing in Tehran, of a Memorandum of Understanding by the Commander of the Iranian Border Guards and his Afghan counterpart, to enhance cooperation in countering terrorism and drug trafficking. During President Ghani's visit to Turkmenistan in late-January he discussed with President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow, the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline and the creation of the Afghanistan-Turkmenistan-Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey 'Lapiz Lazuli' transport corridor, and concluded a memorandum of understanding on the Further Development of Cooperation in the Area of Electric Power, and a Programme of Cooperation between their respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs, as well as supplementary agreements on several electricity supply contracts.

18. Afghanistan and Pakistan continued to intensify efforts to improve security cooperation. On 17 December, Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff visited Kabul to discuss security coordination. This was followed by a tripartite meeting in Pakistan on 23 December, between Afghanistan's Army Chief, the Commander of the International Security Assistance Force, and Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff. On 11 January Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Chief met with President Ghani in Kabul. Outcomes included agreements to reopen the Joint Border Coordination Centres at the Torkham and Spin Boldak crossing points and for coordinated counter-terrorism operations along the shared frontier. Exchanges also took place between legislators, with an Afghan delegation participating in the 31 December Afghanistan-Pakistan Parliamentary Security Dialogue in Islamabad. In turn, on 9 January a delegation of Pakistani political party officials discussed counter-terrorism cooperation and border security with senior officials in Kabul. On the economic front, in early January, an Afghan-Pakistan Transit and Trade Coordination Authority meet in Islamabad to review the status of the Agreement and discussed its expansion to form a Pakistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan Trilateral Transit Trade Agreement.

19. On 9 February, the first round of China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Strategic Dialogue was held in Kabul. The parties discussed the peace and security situation in the region, as well as the need to deepen trilateral cooperation in counter-terrorism and security. Both China and Pakistan pledged to support the Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process. In support of multi-lateral engagement, Chief Executive Officer Abdullah represented Afghanistan at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's 13th Meeting of the Council of Heads of Government in Astana, on 14 and 15 December. The meeting's Joint Communique stressed the importance of regional cooperation in the areas of trade, transport and energy, including with observer states. On 29 January, Kabul hosted a seminar on "Regional Radicalization, Causes and Solutions", an activity of the counter terrorism confidence-building measure of the 'Heart of Asia' – Istanbul Process.

20. On 29 January, the International Contact Group on Afghanistan met in Abu Dhabi to consider economic, security and political events in Afghanistan. As part of continued regional engagement, from 8 to 10 February, my Special Representative visited Uzbekistan and held discussions with senior Uzbek officials that included the regional dimensions of counter-narcotics and broader issues of regional security and stability.

III. Human Rights

21. On 18 February 2015, UNAMA released its 2014 Annual Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict. The report documented 10,548 civilian casualties (3,699 killed and 6,849 injured) in 2014, the highest number since UNAMA began documenting civilian casualties in 2009 and marking a 22 per cent increase in civilian casualties compared with 2013. Seventy-two per cent of civilian casualties were attributed to anti-Government elements, 14 per cent to pro-Government forces (12 per cent to Afghan National Security Forces and two per cent to international military forces) and 10 per cent to unattributed cross-fire between pro-Government forces and anti-Government elements. Explosive remnants of war account for three per cent of civilian casualties (422 casualties, 124 killed and 298 injured), a 20 per cent increase compared with 2013. Ground engagements between anti-Government elements and pro-Government forces remained the leading cause of civilian casualties, accounting for 3,605 civilian casualties (1,092 killed and 2,513 injured); followed by improvised explosive devices, accounting for 2,978 civilian casualties (925 killed and 2,053 injured).

22. Between 16 November 2014 and 14 February 2015, UNAMA documented 2,068 civilian casualties (730 killed and 1,338 injured), reflecting a sharp increase of 25 per cent from the same period in 2013-2014. Seventy-one per cent of civilian casualties were attributed to anti-Government elements, 16 per cent to pro-Government forces (15 per cent to Afghan National Security Forces and one per cent to international military forces) and seven per cent to unattributed cross-fire between pro-Government forces and anti-Government elements. Five per cent of civilian casualties, resulting mostly from explosive remnants of war, could not be attributed. Ground engagements continued to be the leading cause of civilian casualties, accounting for 556 civilian casualties (174 deaths and 382 injured), followed by improvised explosive devices. On 13 December 2014, anti-Government elements killed 11 de-miners and injured six others in Wa Sher district, Hilmand province. Civilian casualties by pro-Government forces included an incident on 31 December 2014 in Sangin District, Hilmand Province, in which the Afghan National Army fired three mortar rounds

from a check post that impacted on a civilian house where a wedding was underway causing 83 civilian casualties (29 killed and 54 injured). The Government announced an investigation with the results pending at the time of reporting.

23. The United Nations led country task force on monitoring and reporting on children and armed conflict documented 514 child casualties (155 killed and 359 injured) in 204 incidents between 16 November 2014 and 14 February 2015. Most child casualties were caused during ground engagements between pro-Government forces and anti-Government elements (185 casualties), followed by explosive remnants of war (99 casualties) and improvised explosive devices attacks (95 casualties). Children were especially vulnerable in the southern region of the country, witnessing 28 per cent of the total child casualties reported. Anti-Government elements were responsible for 51 per cent of the total child casualties, while pro-Government forces were responsible for 24 per cent, unattributed incidents were the cause of 25 per cent of casualties. Child casualties decreased by 19 per cent compared to the last reporting period.

24. The Government made significant progress in implementing its "road map towards compliance," a 15-point targeted plan aimed at expediting implementation of the 2011 Action Plan for the Prevention of Underage Recruitment. On 13 December 2014, the upper house of the National Assembly approved a draft presidential decree criminalizing underage recruitment by Afghan security forces which President Ghani endorsed on 2 February 2015. United Nations advocacy with legislators and Ministry of Justice representatives contributed to the approval of the decree.

25. To mark the annual 16-day campaign of global activism to end gender violence held from 25 November to 10 December, the United Nations supported outreach activities across the country hosting debates, radio programs and workshops that raised awareness of the urgent need to address violence against Afghan women and girls. UNAMA organized events in 13 provinces that engaged more than 400 Afghans including 190 women aimed at promoting greater understanding of legal guarantees that protect women from violence. To coincide with the launch of the campaign, on the 25 November 2014, the Government published its second report on the status of the implementation of the Elimination of Violence Against Women law. The report's findings were based on 5,406 cases of violence against women registered by the Government and noted a 20 per cent increase in the overall registration of cases of violence against women compared to the last report. Of these 5,406 cases, 3,715 were registered under the Elimination of Violence Against Women law, with battery and laceration remaining the most prevalent registered acts of violence against women. The report noted a significant increase in registered cases of murder and underage marriage, and that mediation remained the most common method of settling cases of violence against women.

26. Following issuance of the 2 January 2015 presidential decree No. 39 on the Commutation and Amnesty of the Punishment of Juveniles and Prisoners, the Government released at least 144 women and girls detained for moral crimes. The United Nations has repeatedly raised concerns over the illegal practice of arresting and prosecuting women who leave their homes for what is termed moral crimes, including charging them with the intention to commit adultery, which is not a crime under Afghan law.

27. On 25 February 2015, UNAMA released its third major report on the treatment of conflict-related detainees in Afghan custody. The report found that despite Government

efforts in 2013-14 to address torture and ill-treatment of conflict-related detainees by officials of the National Directorate of Security, Afghan National Police and Afghan National Army, particularly through implementation of a February 2013 presidential decree, torture and ill-treatment of detainees persisted. UNAMA found that one third (278) of the 790 detainees it interviewed across the country experienced torture or ill-treatment on arrest or in numerous detention facilities of the Afghan security forces. While the incidence of torture and ill-treatment among detainees interviewed decreased by 14 per cent compared to UNAMA's January 2013 report findings, the February 2015 report stressed that increased efforts were needed to end and prevent torture by Afghan officials in compliance with the Government's obligations under Afghan and international law. The report found a pervasive lack of accountability for perpetrators of torture and observed that continuing impunity for torture enabled torture to continue. UNAMA called on the Government to establish a national preventive mechanism on torture with independent inspectors, civilian oversight and referral of perpetrators for prosecution and disciplinary action. In response to UNAMA's report, the Government announced a national action plan to eliminate torture that includes regulatory reforms, deterrence measures and comprehensive training programmes.

IV. Implementation of the Kabul Process and coordination of development assistance

28. On 4 December, Afghanistan and the United Kingdom co-chaired the London Conference on Afghanistan, at which partner countries, international financial institutions, and multilateral and non-governmental organisations renewed commitments to support the country's progress towards security and stability in the Transformation Decade, and the new administration presented its reform plans. Conference participants welcomed the reform plan to address corruption, governance, and human rights concerns, and it was agreed to update the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework accordingly at a Senior Officials Meeting to be held later in 2015. In this regard, the Government is preparing an action plan for implementing the priorities outlined in its conference paper.

29. The London Conference on Afghanistan commitments to reducing Afghanistan's dependence on external support were made in a context of limited economic growth. At the conference, the World Bank reported that economic growth had declined sharply from the average annual rate of 9.4 per cent during 2003-2012 to 3.7 per cent in 2013 and 1.5 per cent in 2014. The economic slowdown contributed to an overall decline in government revenues, constraining operations and potentially exacerbating future fiscal gaps, which are projected to persist into the Transformation Decade. The International Monetary Fund continued to encourage reforms, including in the banking sector, to increase Afghanistan's prospects for promoting trade and commerce, which are priorities of the new administration. Despite these challenges, the Government ended the 1393 (2014) fiscal year with a positive cash balance, which the Ministry of Finance attributed to donor contributions following the Government's October 2014 request for assistance to close the 1393 fiscal gap. Following discussions with the International Monetary Fund, the Government revised its initial draft of the 1394 (2015) fiscal year budget, making adjustments that included lowering revenue projections. The lower house of the National Assembly approved the document on 28 January 2015. The enacted budget allows ongoing Government-funded development projects to continue, but approved no new discretionary initiatives for 2015. As a result, some donor contributions made in response to the October 2014 request by the Government included funds that had previously been budgeted for development initiatives. Operating expenditures, including security costs, are budgeted to increase this year.

30. The Government continued to prioritise efforts to address corruption, including the follow-up on the collapse of the Kabul Bank to improve recovery of the Bank's assets and clarifying the division of labour among the anti-corruption institutions. In support of improved anti-corruption activities, the Government issued an administrative order to remove the duplication of functions among key state anti-corruption institutions, including the High Office of Oversight, the Supreme Audit Office and Attorney General's Office, and to separate policy support functions from monitoring and oversight responsibilities. In addition, the Government continued the oversight role of the Independent Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, including the latter's monitoring of anti-corruption measures in government institutions. During the reporting period, the Government initiated new reform processes in the Customs and Revenue Departments to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the revenue collection process and to reduce corruption in the system. Afghanistan also continued its progress through the review process of the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, led by the High Office of Oversight.

31. The new Government has prioritized the strengthening of its partnership with civil society. In this context, civil society has, since the London Conference on Afghanistan, continued to organize to engage more effectively with the Government and key stakeholders on issues of national development. The Afghan Institute for Civil Society was established in mid-January to certify Afghan civil society organizations that have received requisite standardized capacity-building training that adhere to internationally accepted standards and locally appropriate values and principles in their work.

32. At the London Conference, Afghanistan included the restoration of public confidence in justice institutions and ensuring the rule of law among its priority areas. The Supreme Court Chief Justice Rasheed Rashid has commenced steps to reinforce the Government's commitment to reform including a comprehensive review of the credentials of all judicial staff with the purpose of ensuring staff are qualified. The Supreme Court has also established the Special Court for Ministers as required by the Constitution, to review indictments of seven former ministers for corruption and financial crimes submitted by the Attorney General's Office.

33. On 9 December, the Ministry of Interior approved the formal establishment of the Police Women Councils following its initial pilot phase. A code of conduct for the councils was formulated by the Ministry's Department of Gender, Human Rights and Children with technical support from the United Nations. Following the approval, country wide expansion of the initiative took place with the establishment of eight new councils, with the initiative now established in 17 provinces. In addition, efforts to promote community-based policing practices in line with the Ministry's ten year vision continued. Formal consultations between the Afghan National Police and communities, supported by the United Nations, resulted in agreements being signed by police and community representatives in 19 districts across five provinces to implement community-based policing approaches.

34. On January 13, the Central Statistics Organization launched a report on the first socio-demographic and economic survey results for Kabul Province. The survey is supported with technical assistance by the United Nations and is being expanded across the provinces to provide more reliable population and socio-economic data to guide policy and planning activities in lieu of a nationwide census.

35. On January 18, the Ministry of Youth Affairs together with the United Nations launched the first ever National Youth Policy for Afghanistan, which was developed with United Nations support. Prior to this on 9 December, the "State of Afghanistan Youth Report" was launched by the Ministry of Youth Affairs. The report focused on Afghanistan's demographic youth bulge and strategic areas for investment in order for the country to benefit from its growing population.

36. During the period, United Nations country team embarked on a series of measures to reinforce the coherence and effectiveness of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2015-2019 and strengthen their commitments to the 'United Nations working together' approach. Foremost amongst the changes adopted in December were measures to harmonize and streamline procurement procedures as well as a cash transfer system. Integrated annual work plans detailing the United Nations programmes and budgets will form the basis for a comprehensive portfolio review of all United Nations activities undertaken since 2012. In addition, during the reporting period both the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) country programmes for 2015-2019, which are aligned to the Government of Afghanistan's priorities and United Nations Development Assistance Framework, were agreed with the Government.

V. Humanitarian Assistance

37. A sharp increase in voluntary returns to Afghanistan has been reported since the start of 2015. As of 31 January, 22,309 individuals spontaneously returned to Afghanistan from Pakistan, including registered refugees and undocumented Afghans. This is the highest figure recorded for the month of January since 2003 and is approximately equivalent to the total for the whole of 2014. The majority of families are returning from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Kashmir areas and have resided there for an average 15-25 years. Returning families have reported incidences of coercion and harassment, as well as home and workplace raids, with many of those interviewed stating that returning to Afghanistan was the only viable option. As of 31 January, 1,472 Afghans were also deported in that month, compared to 3,754 in 2014. The return of registered Afghan refugees declined by 56 per cent to 16,957 persons returning in 2014. The decrease in 2014 was attributed in part to uncertainty regarding the elections and concerns about security in the transition period, but primarily concerns about limited employment opportunities in Afghanistan. However, this declining trend has been reversed from the start of 2015. During the month of January 2015, 3,317 Afghan refugees were assisted in returning to Afghanistan. This represents a 90 percent increase in comparison to January 2014. UNHCR has intensified its advocacy for the respect of asylum space and the voluntary character of return.

38. Large scale cross-border population movements continue as a result of military operations in Pakistan's North Waziristan Agency. As of 31 January, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had assessed 42,008 refugee families in Khost and Paktika provinces since mid-June 2014. The majority are living with host families, with 8,065 families living in the Gulan camp in Khost province. In Paktika, additional displacement has been reported at the end of January. These figures indicate a continuing influx of refugees, as a result, humanitarian agencies will need to continue to respond to both emergency needs for new arrivals as well as longer term protection, social and economic concerns.

39. As of 31 January, the Task Force on Internally Displaced Persons, co-chaired by the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation and UNHCR, recorded 12,754 persons displaced in Afghanistan owing to conflict since the start of 2015. Overall, 156,193 conflict displaced individuals were recorded in Afghanistan in 2014, representing an eight per cent increase compared to 2013 and bringing the total number of internally displaced persons profiled in Afghanistan to 805,409 at the end of 2014. During January 2015, around 3,000 individuals were displaced in the southern region, largely from Hilmand and Uruzgan Provinces to Kandahar province and Khandahar urban areas. Increased displacement was also recorded in the northern region where around 3,500 individuals were displaced, particularly in the Kunduz area, and in the central region, where around 3,500 individuals were displaced. Displacements continue to be attributed to ongoing conflict between the Afghan National Army and armed non-state actors, harassment by armed non-state actors, and general insecurity. The Government of Afghanistan showed a renewed commitment towards finding solutions to the long-standing internal displacement, in line with its internally displaced persons policy adopted in November 2013.

40. During the reporting period, the United Nations, non-governmental organizations with the National Disaster Management Committee and the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority continued to provide assistance to vulnerable communities across the country following the onset of the winter period. In the north and northeast, an estimated 12,300 people were assisted with children's clothing, blankets and tarpaulins. Prior to the onset of winter, the Shelter Cluster reported that, as of 31 December, 83 per cent of shelters funded as part of the response to severe flooding in the north of the country in the first half the year were completed. Assistance to informal settlements in Kabul by humanitarian agencies to date includes support to 7,904 families with two months of emergency food rations and to 6,617 families with fuel assistance. In Khost and Paktika provinces, a total 23,326 refugee families have received winter assistance packages. The Food Cluster will continue distributions of wheat, flour, vegetable oil, pulses, salt and high-energy biscuits throughout the winter. Nearly 340,000 beneficiaries have received assistance to date, despite only 35 per cent of the planned pre-positioning of supplies being available due to a funding shortfall. The Health Cluster pre-positioned basic medical supplies and medicines to support an estimated 1.9 million people in 116 districts living in 24 provinces. In addition, with support from the Common Humanitarian Fund, temporary health clinics have been established for communities that are isolated during the winter period.

41. In 2014, mine action partners, coordinated by the United Nations, cleared 1,015 minefields and 63 battlefields in 392 communities, resulting in 117 districts being declared mine-free. Despite these significant gains, limited funding meant that the sector did not meet its 2014 target for clearance operations, as set out in the ten-year Ottawa Treaty Work Plan. It is estimated that 3,912 minefields and 248 battlefields remain, affecting 1,596 communities across 258 districts and 33 provinces. The remaining ordnance hampers freedom of movement, curtails agricultural activity, and slows economic growth. The United Nations is also addressing contamination resulting from International Security Assistance Force operations by working with the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission to coordinate the clearance of former international military bases and firing ranges. As of the end of January, 324.6 sq km of firing ranges had been cleared and approximately 67,400 explosive items and 14,150 items of small arms ammunition removed or destroyed. Of the 102 former International Security Assistance Force ranges to be cleared, the United States is responsible for 84 and is ahead of schedule for clearing them by December 2015. Progress has also been

made on the issue of unrecorded, post-2001 contamination with dialogue between stakeholders initiated and funds raised for surveys that will help address the problem.

42. During the reporting period, the Government of Afghanistan and UNICEF signed the largest ever Country Programme Plan of Action 2015-2019 for a total of \$665 million. It is to provide children, especially those in hard-to-reach areas, with greater access to services including health, nutrition, child protection, education, water, sanitation and hygiene.

43. Humanitarian access constraints continued to be recorded under the United Nations global monitoring framework. In total, 294 incidents were recorded in 2014 including attacks against personnel, assets and facilities and the violation of health facilities. Of the total number of incidents, 223 affected non-governmental organisations. Overall, there were 57 aid workers killed and 47 injured, 182 abductions and 11 arrest/detentions. There were 64 incidents recorded against health workers, 13 against demining sites and seven against educational institutions. A temporary ban on the polio vaccination campaign that limited access to 650,000 unvaccinated children was imposed in Hilmand Province by armed non-state actors in mid-December and further to United Nations engagement with all parties was lifted in early February. Disruptions to the vaccination campaigns are of particular concern as Afghanistan has reported 28 cases of polio in 2014 compared to 14 cases in 2013.

44. As of 31 December, humanitarian funding for Afghanistan reached \$439 million, of which \$268 million (66 per cent) is aligned with the United Nations Common Humanitarian Action Plan. Of the remaining balance, \$67 million was reported for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the remainder is not aligned. Of the funds aligned with the Common Humanitarian Action Plan, 67 per cent is allocated to United Nations agencies and 33 per cent to non-governmental organizations.

VI. Counter-narcotics

45. On 17 December, the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics, with technical support from the United Nations, released the Afghanistan Drug Report 2013 that presented an overview of progress on aspects of the national drug-control strategy. It highlighted that the net export value of opiates was estimated at \$2.9 billion which, combined with the value of the domestic market of \$0.12 billion, is equivalent to 15 per cent of Afghanistan's Gross Domestic Product. The report also noted that although the average price of opium fell, the price remains relatively high at over US\$160 per kilogram compared to the 2009 level of US\$75 per kilogram and therefore opium continues to retain its value. Illicit drug use remained prevalent within the country with an estimated 1.3 - 1.6 million illicit drug users. The report noted that whilst treatment capacity was increasing, it must be scaled up and sustained in order to counter the harmful effects of illicit drug use. The report also includes the first ever situation analysis of counter narcotics prisoners, and provides data on their socioeconomic background and reasons for involvement in narcotics. The report concludes with a set of policy recommendations to refocus government counter narcotic efforts which address its assessment of progress made and the current challenges.

46. Between 1 November 2014 and 31 January 2015, Afghan law enforcement authorities conducted a total of 713 counter narcotics operations which resulted in the seizure of 1,700 kilograms of heroin, 6,325 kilograms of morphine, 15,012 kilograms of opium, 39,299 kilograms of cannabis, 317 kilograms of solid precursor chemicals and 3,621 litres of liquid

transparent and inclusive engagement with all stakeholders, including donors, on the way forward.

51. As economic challenges continue to mount, the continued decline in Afghanistan's growth rate is cause for grave concern. The negative impact on Government revenues has already affected its capacity to deliver administrative functions and services. The relatively mild winter being experienced in Afghanistan could damage the country's largest economic sector – agriculture – due to the potential for drought. The new administration has made a priority of implementing measures for revenue mobilization, as outlined by the Government's London Conference reform agenda. I welcome the successful adoption of the 2015 budget and its focus on fiscal discipline. As Afghanistan transitions to a more normalized economy, sustained and predictable levels of donor support will remain critical. Member States have a vital role to play in meeting their commitments for financial and security assistance through the Transformation Decade in a manner consistent with strengthening Afghan institutions and processes.

52. Encouraging investor and donor confidence will also entail comprehensive Government efforts to tackle corruption. I welcome the new administration's early attention to accountability and the return of assets over the collapse of Kabul Bank; clarifying the roles and responsibilities of different anti-corruption institutions; and, fulfilling constitutional requirements for senior officials to declare their assets. Sustained attention will be required including Government commitment to addressing the recommendations of the Independent Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Committee.

53. Amidst economic slowdown, the illicit economy will likely grow proportionally. It risks further entrenching the illegal drug trade. As it is, a criminal nexus fuels insecurity, undermines the rule of law, and threatens the health and wellbeing of Afghanistan, the region, and wider international community. The only sustainable solutions are comprehensive ones in which counter-narcotic efforts are truly mainstreamed into all development planning and strong political will is demonstrated. Enabling the growth of the licit private sector will require continued progress in implementing laws and regulations, including to effectively tackle money-laundering and terrorism financing.

54. Peace remains the fundamental precondition to durable and sustained political and economic progress in Afghanistan. An alignment of factors – including the drawdown of international military forces, a new administration in Kabul, increased regional engagement including by China, and improved bilateral relations with Pakistan – offer new possibilities at this critical juncture. Concrete steps are now required and strong, visionary leadership will be necessary to overcome entrenched interests amidst self-generating cycles of conflict stretching back decades. I welcome President Ghani's public calls for Afghan-to-Afghan dialogue and outreach to Islamabad, and I urge all parties to seize this opportunity and work toward agreeing the necessary mechanisms to formalize and sustain progress. The United Nations in Afghanistan maintains contacts with all parties in accordance with its mandate and continues to use its good offices for this purpose, standing ready to assist as requested. There is added impetus to such efforts in view of more extremist and brutal groups now active in the broader region and with an expansionist agenda.

55. Regional support is a crucial element in reinforcing the likelihood of success of Afghan-led reconciliation efforts and sustainable economic development. The Beijing Declaration at the Istanbul Process Ministerial demonstrated the unanimous backing of the neighbours and regional stakeholders for rapid progress and I welcome China's continued efforts to ensure momentum. I continue to urge attention to the Heart of Asia – Istanbul Process including lead countries convening regional technical group meetings on the

precursor chemicals. In addition, a total of nine heroin laboratories were dismantled and 182 vehicles and 127 weapons seized. A total of 827 suspects were arrested with one member of the Afghan security forces killed and four counter-narcotics police officers wounded. The increase in seizures is attributed to a combination of the improved capability of the counter narcotics police to launch intelligence led operations and improved coordination of efforts within Afghan law enforcement agencies and the law enforcement agencies of neighbouring countries.

VII. Mission Support

47. UNAMA continued efforts to align resources to ensure cost efficient operations to enable mandated activities across the country. The Mission has reduced operational costs through efficiencies achieved in the contracting of the Mission's air operation assets and also in part to the successful roll-out of the Umoja enterprise resource planning project. The Mission also continued to explore further cost-sharing options with United Nations partners to enhance common services, most notably in the provision of emergency medical care.

VIII. Observations

48. At the close of 2014, the overall Kabul Process of Transition covering political, security and socio-economic dimensions was completed, as outlined in major international conferences on Afghanistan in Kabul (2010), Bonn (2011) and Tokyo (2012). Afghanistan has now entered the Transformation Decade as of 1 January, having assumed full leadership and ownership in its national affairs. At December's London Conference, President Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah put forward a far reaching reform agenda entitled Realizing Self Reliance which was widely welcomed in Afghanistan and by international partners. Addressing the country's many challenges in a sustainable, strategic and cohesive manner will require strong direction and a whole of government approach.

49. The reporting period has been marked by ongoing work to form and finalise the composition of the National Unity Government. The prolonged appointment process for ministers and other senior officials has resulted in understandable frustration on the part of many Afghans who were hoping for more rapid progress. At the same time, the fact that these potentially contentious negotiations have been undertaken in a mutually respectful manner between the two leaders and their teams is encouraging. I call on the executive and legislature to work together closely in finalising a diverse and professional administration with strong female representation.

50. The 21 September Political Agreement, which set forth commitment to a National Unity Government, also contained an ambitious schedule of elections and reforms - reiterated at the London Conference - to culminate in a Loya Jirga which will address fundamental issues of governance. The deeply held interest in electoral issues, including future parliamentary and district council polls, is reflected in the different initiatives which emerged during the reporting period. Broad agreement is urgently required on a cohesive approach. This would involve developing realistic timelines, parameters, and sequencing in approaching legal and institutional changes; a robust system of voter identification; and, operationalizing preparations for elections. I urge the rapid formation of the agreed Electoral Reform Commission as provided for in the Political Agreement and support efforts to ensure

confidence building measures in accordance with the agreed timeline. I am also encouraged by strengthened bilateral engagement between Afghanistan and Pakistan and I urge commitment and patience in building the necessary trust. Central to increasing confidence through common interests will be regional trade and strengthened interconnectivity and I welcome consultations on, inter alia, the formation of the Pakistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan Trilateral Transit Trade Agreement.

56. In 2014, the number of civilians killed and injured in the conflict in Afghanistan topped 10,000 for the first time since the United Nations began systematically documenting civilian casualties in 2009. Nearly three-quarters of all civilian casualties continue to be attributed to the Taliban and affiliated groups. Ground engagements were the leading annual cause of civilian casualties for the first time. I urge all parties to respect the laws of war including the distinction between civilians and combatants and to avoid using heavy weapons in civilian-populated areas. Afghan security forces are now in the lead in securing the country and its population. I commend the resolve and bravery its personnel have demonstrated in the face of rising attacks and welcome continued international support including through the Resolute Support Mission. Strengthening civilian casualty mitigation mechanisms and accountability in the conduct of combat and the treatment of conflict-related detainees must be a priority in the institutional development of Afghan security agencies. The new National Action Plan on the Elimination of Torture is an important step. I look forward to its implementation.

57. The coming summer season will likely see an intensification of the armed conflict. Even amidst the new opportunities for dialogue outlined above there remain hard-line elements of the insurgency which will want to test the resolve of Afghan security forces. There must be realism about the timelines for a peace process and commitment to the ultimate goal of peace while recognizing that the path will not be fast and is unlikely to be smooth. The human cost of conflict-related violence goes far beyond immediate casualties. The Mission's 2014 annual protection of civilians report highlights the plight of widows and their children who lose not only a breadwinner but a source of social protection when their husbands have been killed or injured in the conflict. The conflict also continues to adversely affect the capacity of government, humanitarian actors and communities to respond to crises. Each of Afghanistan's growing number of polio cases is a personal – and preventable – tragedy and I note with grave concern that polio vaccination in Hilmand Province was once again disrupted in this period. I welcome its resumption and call on all parties to respect obligations to humanitarian access. To be effective the immunization campaigns must be sustained and cannot be subject to disputes between parties.

58. The sharp increase in displaced and undocumented individuals returning from Pakistan will require close cooperation in ensuring sustainable solutions including reintegration into the Afghan economy. Growing internal displacement underscores the importance of continued progress in implementing the national policy on internally displaced persons. I welcome the President's particular interest and commitment to meeting the needs of this vulnerable population.

59. Noting the continued importance of supporting political stabilisation in Afghanistan and monitoring a security situation which gives indications of worsening in the short term, I would thus request the Security Council to extend the mandate of UNAMA, due to expire on 17 March, for a further 12 months. In so doing, I reiterate the commitment of the United Nations to a sustained partnership with Afghanistan, and note the effective manner in which the existing mandate has been utilised throughout 2014, in particular its good offices functions and engagement on critical human rights issues and donor coherence. I call upon

Member States to continue to provide the resources required to maintain our engagement and activities across the country.

60. I would like to express my gratitude to all United Nations personnel in Afghanistan and to my Special Representative, Nicholas Haysom, for continued dedication, often under challenging conditions, to fulfilling our commitments in support of the people of Afghanistan.