

Meeting : Security Council on the situation in Afghanistan

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Speaker : Representative of New Zealand

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Thank you Mr President,

New Zealand appreciates the opportunity to contribute to this important and timely discussion, and takes this opportunity to congratulate you on assuming the Chair and the new members of this Council.

We thank the Secretary-General for his latest report and Special Representative Kai Eide for his work, for this morning's briefing and, above all, for the role he has played. We wish him well.

While the report is sobering and raises many matters of real concern, we agree that the key priorities must be a more focused and better coordinated international effort, as well as reform of the Afghan electoral process and Government. We affirm that this United Nations has a critical role to play in Afghanistan, and will continue to support that role.

Last year, New Zealand reviewed its participation in Afghanistan and reconfirmed its commitment to the provincial reconstruction team that has led work in Bamyan province since 2003. We also redeployed our Special Forces to Afghanistan during the period President Obama has identified as critical to defeating the insurgency. New Zealand welcomed the 1st of December statement by President Obama, given its emphasis on a coherent and credible pathway forward in Afghanistan. We particularly welcome his focus on increased short-term military capacity to improve stability and security, enhancing the capacity of the Afghan National Army and Police to assume primary security responsibility.

Mindful that the Secretary-General's report calls for a "change of mindset in the international community and the Government of Afghanistan", we also support President Obama's sense of urgency about transferring that security responsibility to local forces and on shifting the focus of international efforts to building civilian capacities that will put Afghanistan on a peaceful development path. Without those commitments, there can be no realistic way forward.

For its part, New Zealand is stepping up its capacity-building with the Afghan National Police in Bamyan, preparing a pathway for the civilianization of our PRT, and is increasing its ODA

budget to underpin those changes. We are establishing an embassy and appointing an ambassador in Kabul to coordinate our efforts with those of our partners including, most importantly, the Afghans themselves, so that when the international troops are drawn down, they leave behind a country capable of managing its own security and the increased humanitarian assistance that nations such as ours have signalled their readiness to provide.

All that represents, Mr President, a significant commitment for a small country with limited military and other resources. It is a commitment made for good reason. It is made for the people of Afghanistan, but it is also a commitment made in expectation of a meaningful effort and response from President Karzai and his new Administration, when it can finally be formed.

Nothing should disguise the challenge they face. While we welcomed the fact that elections were held, doubts about the probity of the results, about the lack of progress around institution-building, and concerns as to the true depth of the Administration's commitment to anti-corruption measures have sorely tested the capacities of contributing nations to maintain or enhance those contributions. We strongly support President Karzai's moves quickly to address the deep-seated security, governance, corruption, human rights, justice and narcotics challenges facing Afghanistan — all identified in today's report.

It is imperative that the Government delivers tangible improvements to the daily lives of ordinary Afghans. In so doing, it will have the support of the international community, but Mr President, those who put their military in harm's way in the interests of Afghanistan and its people are entitled to see better progress on corruption and governance.

While we strongly support efforts to build a new and peaceful Afghanistan, we look to the Karzai Administration to meet the obligations it has now incurred to the international community. We therefore welcome Britain's lead in coordinating international support through a Conference later this month. We will attend at ministerial level, and hope we quickly reach the stage where meetings to discuss Afghanistan's future can be regularly held in Afghanistan itself. And so we welcome the fact that the next meeting is to be held in Kabul.

Mr President,

As the Secretary-General's report emphasizes, there is an urgent need to improve governance and give greater confidence to ordinary Afghans that their Administration is working for them, not least in stamping out corruption. The extent of corruption outlined in the report makes it clear that the Administration must address this in all forms and at all levels. For all those who abuse the system, there must be no sanctuaries, no safe havens, no impunity.

Mr President,

We want Afghanistan, its people and its Administration to succeed in their endeavours. They have our good wishes, our blessings and our active commitment. We know they need time and space to rebuild their country, and our contribution is to help provide that. The people of Afghanistan who showed, sometimes risked, their support for democracy in the recent elections, are entitled to see greater probity and better governance as a result. But the military

and civilians who risk their lives to work in Afghanistan for this United Nations, for civil society and in provincial reconstruction teams — all to help Afghanistan and its people — are also entitled to see better progress on addressing corruption and governance issues. It is for the Government and people of Afghanistan to decide for themselves how best they should do that, but doing it, Mr President, is the nub of the matter as we see it.

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