

Declaration on the future of Afghanistan

“NATO Young Leaders Forum on Afghanistan”

Preamble

1. We, the young leaders of 25 nations, concerned about the future of Afghanistan, have gathered in Bratislava from 9 to 13 December 2012, at the dawn of the gradual withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan, to discuss its future course. We reaffirm our strong interest in its future. We share a common vision and the belief in a more peaceful, prosperous and just Afghanistan.
2. Bearing in mind that the irreversible transition of full security responsibility from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) is on track for completion by the end of 2014, we have adopted a Declaration on the future of Afghanistan that lays out our vision for Afghanistan for the upcoming years: able to defend its citizens against threats; capable of governing its political affairs; and successful in achieving sustainable growth and development.
3. We pay tribute to all the brave men and women from the Allied and partner nations serving in the NATO-led missions and operations. We commend them for their professionalism and dedication and acknowledge the invaluable support provided to them by their families and loved ones.

Governance, Rule of Law, Justice and Human Rights

4. We recognise that fair elections are essential for good governance and welcome the efforts to collect data on the population in Afghanistan. We remain concerned by the lack of reliability of national statistics. We recommend the introduction of electronic identity cards.
5. We are encouraged by Afghanistan's and the international community's recognition of the problem of corruption and their combined commitment to its eradication at all levels in the public and private sectors. We suggest the creation of an independent corruption commission and that international financial aid is channelled more directly. We recommend the creation of a black-list of people involved in corruption.

6. We recognise the codification of human rights in the 2004 Constitution but express our concern with the low level of human-rights enforcement. We suggest increasing public awareness of human rights issues through the use of public campaigns.
7. We recognise the existence of the Afghan legal framework for the rule of law but we seek an increase in law enforcement. We suggest educating police forces and strengthening the judicial capacity.

Security

8. We acknowledge that the growth of the ANSF continues both qualitatively, in terms of independent operational capability, and quantitatively, in terms of its size, and we believe that NATO should continue to support the professionalization of the ANSF with military, academic, and legal education. We pledge significant support for the training of the ANSF from within and outside of NATO. We acknowledge the successful implementation of flexible security arrangements provided by local non-ANSF units and we express our support for the village stability operations.
9. We recognise the high level of trust in the Afghan National Army and the Ministry of Defence. However, we remain concerned by: the increasing corruption at the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Interior, the politicisation of the armed forces, and a low oversight of private security companies.
10. We are concerned with the incomplete control of the Afghan territories by the ANSF and the declining security trends, seeing even formerly secure areas falling into the hands of criminal elements, as well as an increasing sympathy amongst segments of the ANSF towards insurgent activities.
11. We expect a clearly defined political objective stated by the President with the endorsement by the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Interior. Considering the importance of the peace and reconciliation process with a view to ending the ongoing violence in the country and restoring lasting peace and security, we believe governmental bodies should also define a clear reconciliation program.
12. We believe more attention should be focused on the local level. Local policing with greater national oversight is required. Before supplying additional security assets, local governance must be strengthened by organising participation projects.

13. We support the greater cooperation and collaboration of Afghan and Pakistani military and intelligence communities to foster trust and confidence.

Economic and Social Development

14. We acknowledge the recognition of agriculture and mining sectors as the backbone of the economy and the government's intention to improve it. We suggest the promotion of cooperative farming and agricultural mechanisation.
15. We are concerned with: the lack of economic growth; high inflation; unemployment of women; the influence of the shadow economy and the fiscal constraints of the Afghan Government. We reaffirm our shared goal of achieving Afghanistan's long-term economic growth and fiscal self-reliance and welcome the support of the international community in stabilising Afghanistan.
16. We are concerned with the high level of illiteracy rates, particularly amongst women. Nevertheless, we recognise that Afghanistan has achieved a significant level of development and made notable progress in education, with increasing numbers of children going to schools. We recommend the establishment of new educational institutions along with the standardisation of the present educational system.
17. We recognise the progress in increased youth participation, mobility of students, social networking, access to media and increased participation in sports events, as well as civil society. However, we see challenges in tackling unemployment, in overcoming the pessimism due to the lack of opportunities, and in establishing a meritocracy. The existence of a brain-drain and widespread nepotism is a cause for concern. We suggest the establishment of vocational training centres and mentoring programs. We believe there is a need to increase the number of internships and foreign exchange opportunities.
18. With regard to prolonged life-expectancy, we welcome the improvements in the access to health. We believe attention should be given to raising health awareness through employing Information and Communication Technologies.
19. We acknowledge the achievements made in the construction of thousands of kilometres of new roads. We can identify improvements in the energy sector and stress the need to promote and facilitate power projects through active private sector participation in economically and environmentally sustainable ways for the whole territory of Afghanistan.

Cross-cutting issues

20. We recognise the positive trend in eliminating poppy cultivation in several Afghan provinces and the improvements made in increasing the number of alternative livelihoods. We are concerned about the growing tendency in drug addiction among young people, as well as an alarming growth in drug cultivation. We suggest that solutions be devised to affect both the supply and demand sides. Measures should include enforcing the rule of law, promoting alternative livelihoods, enhancing agricultural reforms, opening new markets, as well as raising awareness of drug issues via educational programs. In order to achieve positive outcomes we highlight the importance of regional re-integration among the communities involved and increasing awareness among local leaders.
21. We are concerned about existing inequalities. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the progress made in increasing access to education for women, as well as the encouragement of their participation in the army, police and civil society. We recommend creating small working groups to empower women in order to guarantee their full enfranchisement within the society. We suggest initiating witness protection programs, in addition to the revision and effective implementation of family law in order to promote the status of women in Afghan society. We stress the importance of women-directed policies for capacity-building ambitions.
22. We observe the progress in bilateral trade improvements, a greater freedom of movement for people and goods, and improvements in inter-parliamentary cooperation. We acknowledge the challenges posed by foreign infiltration and a mistrust towards neighbouring countries. We suggest the enhanced regional cooperation through confidence-building measures, economic diplomacy and cultural exchanges.

In Bratislava, 12th December 2012

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