

## **Chair Statement on Afghanistan and Regional Dimension**

### **Original Version**

**Trieste, Italy, June 27, 2009**

Stability in Afghanistan and in Pakistan, countries positioned in a geographical area of strategic importance, is essential for regional and international peace and security. As lately indicated at The Hague Conference, the dynamics of this particularly challenging situation have not yet been alleviated by an adequate exploitation of the regional potential for cooperation.

Within this geographical and political context, regional cooperation represents a prerequisite for success and can multiply the guarantees for effective and efficient use of the resources being made available by the international community. Regional cooperation can also facilitate exploiting Afghanistan's role as a land bridge. This dimension has now been reckoned as an important, additional pillar of the international strategy for stability in Afghanistan, Pakistan and the entire area and to be substantiated among concerned countries.

Therefore, building upon the last two presidencies, G8 Foreign Ministers, met therefore with their colleagues from Afghanistan and Pakistan and took note of the progress achieved through the 'G8 Afghanistan – Pakistan Initiative' appreciating the work carried out in accordance with the Coordination Arrangement both in Islamabad and in Kabul. Subsequently the Foreign Ministers expanded the previous format by reaching out, through further working sessions, to Foreign Ministry counterparts of neighbouring countries, representatives from other contributing countries as well as other international and regional actors by examining the best strategies for fighting illicit trafficking through effective border management and for facilitating cooperation and economic integration in the wider region.

While the United Nations maintains a central role through UNAMA in Afghanistan in order to ensure the effectiveness and coherence of international action, participants encouraged all Regional Organizations to improve the legal and conventional framework, principally in economic and commercial matters but also in labour migration support following models successfully implemented in other world areas.

Following on the 2002 Kabul Declaration on Good Neighbourly Relations, La Celle Saint Cloud Ministerial Meeting in December 2008 set a new course of action in the regional dimension further witnessed by progress made last March at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Moscow Conference on combating terrorism, illicit drug trafficking and organized crime and by other triangular exercises, as the Tripartite meetings between the United States, Afghanistan, and Pakistan; Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan; Turkey, Afghanistan, and Pakistan; and Russia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

This new climate based on trust and mutual confidence should thus give substance to several programmes and initiatives underway as demonstrated by the concrete progress recorded in conjunction with the convening of the third RECCA on 13 and 14 May in Islamabad. The participants welcomed the decision to assure a follow up on these initiatives as a positive development for the continuity of the RECCA process by supporting a 2010 edition under Turkey's stewardship. The participants also welcome European Commission proposals to establish a RECCA Secretariat, to ensure that progress is maintained between ministerial meetings.

Stability, security, and prosperity in Afghanistan as well as in the surrounding area will be the fruits of an articulated and sustained process that will need to be transposed by public and private actors determined to make progress with a view to win - win regional integration. Being aware that such progress firstly needs to be sustained, applied to several intertwining sectors and accompanied in a timely manner by corresponding internal regulatory efforts at the national level

in the concerned countries, the participants commended all sides concerned to work closely and committed themselves to helping achieve this aim.

#### Border management and countering illicit trafficking

Managing borders and fighting trafficking imply striking a balance between different priorities: customs, counter-narcotics, managing movement of people, law enforcement, socio-economic development, effective controls, and an opportunity to promote contacts, exchange and development. The Dubai Process, led by Afghanistan and Pakistan and facilitated by Canada has resulted in Afghan and Pakistani senior officials coming together to develop an Action Plan for improving bilateral cooperation in the areas of customs, counter-narcotics, law enforcement and managing the movement of people.

Participants manifested support for close cooperation among countries of the region with the purpose of joining forces in the enhancement of controls to stem drug trafficking and smuggling of illicit goods while facilitating licit trade. In this regard, intelligence sharing, coordination in drug enforcement and in action to counter drug trafficking networks will be critical.

Through enhanced border management and implementation of border control centres, the countries of the region and Afghanistan can contribute to improved border security. Programmes assisting the countries of the region and Afghanistan to improve cross-border cooperation and to promote the use of Border Liaison Offices offer opportunities to strengthen the exchange of information and coordination of measures against drug trafficking and related criminal activities. At the same time, such measures are not an obstacle to regional trade flows but rather contribute to the creation of a climate of mutual trust.

Participants agree to open consultations about future coordination on these issues. Furthermore, participants stressed the importance of enhancing judicial cooperation and mutual legal assistance as additional areas where confidence in the region can be built with the purpose of facilitating regional cooperation in countering illicit trafficking. In this context, strengthening measures against money laundering will allow Afghanistan and the countries of the region to pursue sound economic development.

Participants welcome intelligence exchange between the Central Asia Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC), the Joint Planning Cell (JPC) for the countries of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan and the Gulf Criminal Intelligence Centre (GCIC). Upgraded cooperation in intelligence would benefit both control of drug and precursors trafficking. In particular, the establishment of such an intelligence network would facilitate information exchange between the countries of the region as well as the G8 also in view of precursors trafficking into Afghanistan, a country that already stated to the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) its non requirement of such chemicals.

UNODC has developed a draft Regional Programme on Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries to enhance border management, border security and regional cooperation in countering drug trafficking, smuggling of precursors and money laundering. This Programme also further supports the Triangular Initiative and Operation TARCET and promotes measures to enhance judicial cooperation and intelligence sharing among the countries of the Region. Participants welcomed the Regional Programme of UNODC and encouraged G8 member states, the international community and all relevant stakeholders to support it. The participants also mentioned the need for an increased implementation of the provisions of the 1817 UNSC resolution on the fight against illegal trafficking of chemical precursors.

#### Economic and Social Development

Trade is a key factor of growth and integration and is well rooted in the region's traditions. The participants therefore endorse the need to improve and facilitate trade and transit between the countries of the region through the existing regional organisations and arrangements as well as

by expediting progress on implementation and when necessary revision and updating of existing bilateral and multilateral trade and transit conventions and agreements.

Participants recognize the importance of international trade for the development of the region. In this process, they welcome the prospects of trade liberalisation envisaged at the EU – Pakistan summit.

Whilst recognizing the economic and demographic pressures linked to the presence of a huge number of Afghan refugees in some neighboring countries, the solutions to sustainable refugee repatriation as well as to better management of irregular population movements lie in more effective international and national efforts in Afghanistan to address employment challenges, to improve border management, and to realize bilateral agreements on a legal framework for migration, also in view of promoting the return of qualified Afghans.

Pakistan is facing a huge humanitarian crisis with an unprecedented number of internally displaced persons in an area already confronted with large refugee presence. The participants agree on the urgency to give highest attention to this situation in order to mitigate the enormous suffering among the civilian population and help stabilize the area.

As for Afghanistan, the continuing return in dignity and reintegration of refugees and IDPs in a human rights and rule of law perspective is linked to a range of social and economic development interventions as proposed in the Refugee Repatriation and IDP sector strategy of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy for which sustained donor support will be required.

The UNHCR tripartite agreements with the Governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran for safe, voluntary, gradual and dignified refugees return and repatriation remain a useful tool and should be extended. Bilateral and/or multilateral labor migration management initiatives deserve support in close coordination with the concerned countries.

Sustainable development of the agricultural sector is key to the future of Afghanistan and Pakistan as well as other countries in the region, as it is the main source of livelihood for the majority of the population. Moreover, food insecurity and chronic poverty are root causes of civil instability and forced migration. The participants therefore call for expanded agricultural cooperation that could lead to rural development, food security, employment growth, higher income levels, alternatives to poppy cultivation, and ultimately lower tensions in the region.

As for Afghanistan, a comprehensive strategy for food security and agricultural cooperation shall be based on the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, under the leadership of the Ministry of Agriculture, as implemented with support of UN agencies including FAO, IFAD, WFP, and all their partners. This strategy should also aim at ensuring that the programs are designed to have the maximum counter-narcotics effect and at leveraging food assistance programmes such as school feeding and job schemes to create resilience and assets in rural communities.

In this respect, continued collaboration on agricultural inputs, improved management of water and forestry resources, watershed rehabilitation, and effective information systems for monitoring, analysis and sound policy decisions, will be critical. It will also be important to act jointly, and across borders, to further control the spread of animal and plant disease. As for household level food security, it is moreover particularly important to promote the role of women and youth in agriculture-based income generating activities.

Furthermore, the participants stress the need for improved infrastructure and more efficient market access and operations, supported by appropriate trade policies, capacity building and credit availability. These measures will strengthen mutually advantageous regional trade flows, raise income levels and reduce food insecurity in the region.

As regional trade, as well as exchange of persons, call for a reliable and efficient transport infrastructure, participants endorse the requirement for Afghanistan as a land locked country to have easier access to the sea and the need to develop transport infrastructure links among countries of the region.

Inadequate, highly seasonal and unreliable electricity supply is a constraint to growth in the region. Regional power trade is a least-cost and immediate solution to the winter power shortage in some countries. To this end, the Participants encouraged phased and environmentally friendly investments in generation, transmission, distribution and energy efficiency. They also called for increased Afghan energy supplies and economically viable regional corridors that grounded on mutually beneficial agreements among all the countries involved.

Given the strong nexus between water and energy, Participants urged riparian countries to establish stable water usage and water sharing arrangements within international laws and norms. Participants encouraged more research on water resources planning and trans-boundary water management and water sharing.

#### People-to-people contacts

Stability in Afghanistan, and the region needs to be actively supported by Afghan and neighboring countries' civil societies. Building on the Afghan-Pakistani Jirga process initiated in 2007, extended and more articulated processes might be established to allow Afghan, Pakistani and other countries' experts, along with civil societies, to develop comprehensive measures for confidence-building.

In addition to the Trieste ministerial meeting, a scientific symposium ("Afghanistan, and its geographical context: development of a regional network of cultural and scientific cooperation") was organized with wide and qualified participation, providing an example of people-to-people contact as part of the wider fabric of positive relations which participants wish to see realized.

In the same vein, participants encourage the granting of scholarships, gender programmes and the establishment of new joint Chambers of Commerce, thus creating a conducive environment for the development of the region.

For the achievement of these goals, participants consider a crucial factor the enhancement of the human capital of the region with particular attention to gender promotion.

Therefore participants affirm the importance of investigating measures aiming at:

Developing agriculture as a priority to improve people's living conditions and expand licit opportunities of income in the region;

Promoting the education of young generations and women as a driver for social and economic development; this process should include both primary education and vocational training at all levels along the lines of the UN Programme Education for All;

Reinforcing the role of the media as a driver for democratic development and social participation in public life;

Encouraging cultural initiatives, scientific programmes and environmental projects in order to improve the overall condition of the local population;

Fostering the full access of individuals to trade and enterprise, through appropriate forms of institutional and financial support;

Countering extremism and illicit trafficking by spreading messages of moderation, peace, and religious inspiration through cultural and educational institutes and the use of mass media, including radio networks;

Enhancing the visibility of progress in civilian reconstruction in Afghanistan in order to consolidate people's confidence in the Institutions;

Increasing international aid to Pakistan particularly focused on the humanitarian emergency of IDPs and the rehabilitation of infrastructures and social services in their zones of origin so to facilitate their return.

The Italian G8 Presidency will convene a meeting in the margins of next United Nations General Assembly in New York in order to monitor progress in the implementation of this Declaration.

Source:

[http://www.esteri.it/MAE/EN/Sala\\_Stampa/ArchivioNotizie/Interventi/2009/06/20090627\\_ChairStatement.htm](http://www.esteri.it/MAE/EN/Sala_Stampa/ArchivioNotizie/Interventi/2009/06/20090627_ChairStatement.htm)