



Afghanistan Task-Force

Private Seminar I

Brussels, 28 May 2008

CONCLUSIONS

The participants in a private seminar on Afghanistan hosted in Brussels on 28 May 2008 drew up a set of priorities for implementing the strategy ahead in Afghanistan. The discussion focused on four of the most serious challenges undermining Afghanistan's prospect for a stable and free country: corruption, poor governance and lack of rule of law; the growing illegal narcotics trade; the worsening security situation; and the deep poverty and vulnerabilities of the population.

Despite some progress, the international community and the Afghan government have failed to meet Afghans' expectations of economic and social development and of justice and security. The systemic and extremely pervasive corruption within local and national institutions are alienating the population from the new Afghan institutions, creating a climate that is exploited by those insurgent groups and countries who want a weak, unstable and marginalized Afghanistan. Although it is not possible to expect significant improvements immediately, it is essential that the Afghan government sends clear signals of its governance commitment by completing the reorganization of public administration, implementing tough anti-corruption measures and accelerating reforms in the justice and security sectors. The focus should be put on monitoring more effectively the implementation of the strategy agreed upon by all stakeholders.

Based on these considerations, the participants at the private seminar highlighted the following points.

The Afghan Government should:

- take increased responsibility for the country's reconstruction ensuring effective implementation, transparency and accountability of development aid and for building effective and enduring institutions;
- implement economic policies aimed at creating employment as well as a social welfare net able to support the poorest strata of the population, which has not yet benefitted from economic development and suffer from increased prices of staples;
- develop a comprehensive vision and a coherent strategy for the state building process, recognizing that it has failed so far in many areas. The aim must be improved governance, through reform of the state's administration, the strengthening of capabilities of the central and provincial governments, a stronger determination to fight corruption, and a transparent election process; and

- recognize the complexities inherent in pursuing reconciliation with members of the armed resistance but reaffirm that for the overall legitimacy of the intervention in Afghanistan, a credible reconciliation process is a *sine qua non*.

The International Community should:

- commit to long-term financial assistance, bringing it to the equivalent level granted to other post-conflict countries and consistent with the absorption capacity of Afghanistan while making sure that current and future disbursed funds are used more effectively and with greater transparency. Channel a growing portion of funding through the Afghan government and increase the involvement of Afghan institutions, at both local and national levels, in the planning and implementation of the projects while gradually reducing the role of international implementers;
- monitor the effectiveness of aid through an appropriate commission that acts under the authority of the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy and that has the power to sanction error, waste, and the diversion of funds, by blocking or reducing funding;
- promote greater political and economic cooperation between countries of the region aimed at fostering Afghan economic development and overcoming mistrust and suspicion and make a concrete commitment to the success of the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking (including chemical precursors), which also threatens them; and
- pressure the Pakistani authorities to avoid deals with insurgent groups at the expense of peace in Afghanistan and support them to counter the terrorists who conduct cross border attacks against government and foreign targets in Afghanistan. Foster and financially support cooperation between the Afghan and Pakistani governments aimed at removing economic inequalities on both sides of the Durand line and at improving the socio-economic situation in the tribal areas.

The International Community and the Afghan Government should:

- agree on a 'new deal' resting on the principles of responsibility, accountability and conditionality: the levels of funds channeled through Afghan authorities will increase proportionate to the efforts produced to fight corruption in improve rule of law;
- pursue training and capacity-building efforts for the ANA and further reinforce the training programme of the ANP; European countries should increase their contributions and involvement in this area; and
- make the fight against illegal narcotics one of the highest priorities of the reconstruction efforts by taking renewed steps within the current National Drug Control Strategy. The long-term goal must be the significant reduction of the illegal opium economy, as opposed to an over emphasis on eradication. The policy response and resources must be proportionate to the value at different points on the opium chain and the relevant level of threat of the different groups involved: a more robust enforcement and interdiction campaign should be waged against high-level traffickers as well as their protectors both at the local and national levels and the international community should make aid conditional on the Afghan government's starting to address opium-fed institutional corruption; focused livelihood and rural development support should be re-

launched for small farmers with greater funding and strict monitoring. And caution should be exercised about coercive measures which might undermine support for the Afghan government and provide opportunities for the insurgency.