



Brussels Conference on **AFGHANISTAN**

4-5 October 2016

PARTNERSHIP FOR PROSPERITY AND PEACE

Communiqué

***Issued on October 5, 2016 by the 75 countries and 26 international organisations
participating in the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan***

The Brussels Conference was opened by H.E. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and H.E. Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, and concluded by H.E. Abdullah Abdullah, Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The event was co-chaired by H.E. Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission, H.E. Neven Mimica, European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, H.E. Salahuddin Rabbani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and H.E. Eklil Hakimi, Minister of Finance of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

The Brussels Conference on Afghanistan:

Partnership for Prosperity and Peace

(1) We, the National Unity Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (hereafter called the Afghan Government) and the International Community along with other partners, met on 5 October 2016 in Brussels to renew our partnership for prosperity and peace.

(2) We underline our collective commitment to deepen and strengthen our cooperation to achieve Afghanistan's Self-Reliance in the Transformation Decade (2015-2024) and to create a political, social and economic environment that will allow Afghanistan to consolidate peace, security, sustainable development and prosperity.

(3) Important progress has been achieved on Afghanistan's way to a functioning, accountable and increasingly sustainable state, but the substantial challenges that the Country still faces require further efforts to safeguard and build on these joint achievements. To foster this progress, we reaffirm our commitment to the following three pillars over the Transformation Decade:

- Afghan-led state- and institution building as outlined by the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework and the Self Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework (SMAF);
- Sustained international support and funding at or near current levels through 2020 with increased aid effectiveness;
- Regional and international support for ending violence to foster economic development and improve regional economic cooperation, and for a political process towards lasting peace and reconciliation.

Section 1: The Reform Agenda

(4) The International Community welcomes the new Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF) setting out Afghanistan's strategic policy priorities towards achieving self-reliance and the presentation of five new National Priority Programs (Citizens' Charter, Women's Economic Empowerment; Urban Development; Comprehensive Agriculture and National Infrastructure) to improve the conditions for advancing sustainable development and stability.

(5) We note the successful completion of the International Monetary Fund's Staff Monitored Program (SMP) and take note of the recent agreement between the Afghan government and the International Monetary Fund on the Extended Credit Facility supported arrangement that aims to preserve macro-financial stability and sets out a structural reform agenda with a focus on institution building, fiscal and financial reforms,

and measures to combat corruption. We acknowledge the significant progress being made by the Afghan government to increase domestic revenue collection and implement the public financial management roadmap, which coupled with economic growth, are key to realizing self-reliance over the longer term. We welcome the government's commitments to undertake additional reforms to promote higher and more inclusive growth and maintain financial stability.

(6) Credible, inclusive and transparent elections will lead to greater political stability, and strengthen sustainable democracy in Afghanistan. While some progress has been made, concrete steps will be taken by the government to implement in 2017 the essential electoral reforms and prepare for elections to further restore trust and confidence in the electoral process and its institutions. Effective democratic and inclusive governance in accordance with the Constitution remains essential for our partnership.

(7) The International Community welcomes the priority the Afghan government has placed on fighting corruption, which remains a major obstacle to development and stability. The International Community welcomes steps taken so far. The government will effectively implement its anti-corruption measures to ensure that core government functions such as procurement, appointments, financial management and policy making are transparent, accountable and consistent, and that violations are met with legal, timely and consistently applied sanctions. The International Community welcomes the establishment of the High Council on Rule of Law and Anti-corruption and the Anti-Corruption Justice Centre and looks forward to their effective operation.

(8) We underscore the urgency of reducing poverty in Afghanistan by creating employment and addressing particularly widespread problems such as child malnutrition, food insecurity, poor sanitation, and conflict related impoverishment. This requires specific actions and inclusive reform approaches in sectors such as agriculture, infrastructure, and rural and urban development as envisioned in the new National Priority Programs. The International Community recognizes the Afghan leadership in community based development and endorses the proposed investments for improved delivery of essential public services to poor rural and urban communities, in particular for women and girls.

(9) We stress the importance of strengthening the rule of law and pursuing important judicial reforms to strengthen state legitimacy, while protecting the safety and security of judges, prosecutors and defence attorneys. Of particular importance is ensuring all Afghan citizens have access to a formal justice system that is fair and respected in its application of the law. Institution building remains central, including police and civilian policing, the Attorney General's Office, the court system, and the provision of legal aid.

(10) The protection and implementation of the constitutional rights and international human rights in Afghanistan remains essential. Special consideration needs to be given to the rights of women and children, including measures to prevent violence against women and children and forced marriage, and to combat torture or ill treatment as well as discrimination. The International Community welcomes the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on the Ombudsman of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC).

(11) We stress the key role of women in development, justice and peace and the continued commitment to protecting and promoting the rights of women and girls increasing their access to health and education services improving their capacity for self-reliance and expanding their opportunities and participation to achieve economic prosperity. This includes tangible support for the new National Priority Program on Women's Economic Empowerment and our funding for the National Action Plan to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, as well as the Afghan government's commitment to ensure participation of women in all peace processes. Of particular importance is empowering rural women as key agents for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Section 2: Development Partnership

(12) The alignment of international support with Afghanistan's national priorities as outlined in the ANPDF is essential. As set out in the Tokyo Declaration (2012) and reaffirmed at the London Conference on Afghanistan (2014), international partners remain committed to providing significant but gradually declining financial support towards Afghanistan's social and economic development priorities throughout the Transformation Decade, as the Afghan government continues to deliver on its commitments as part of this renewed partnership under the mutual accountability framework.

(13) We note the exceptional development support, which Afghanistan has received and continues to receive from international partners. We reaffirm that the renewed partnership depends upon the principle of mutual accountability and on both sides delivering on their commitments. Donors are committed to build on the gains that have been made by the Afghan people with international support since 2002 and to provide effective assistance including through close alignment with the ANPDF.

(14) Building on the donor community's achievement of Tokyo commitments to increase the level of development assistance channeled through the National Budget of the Afghan Government, we are committed to further increase aid effectiveness. We recognize the need to promote a high degree of Afghan ownership through use of country systems and joint programming, and in line with the commitments under the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. In addition to bilateral agreements and based, amongst others, on implementation of the agreed reforms, in particular progress on the Public Financial Management (PFM) roadmap, we will explore possibilities for different forms of flexible on-budget assistance, including State Building Contracts and expanding programs in support of Afghan development priorities, notably through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) and related incentives or reimbursement schemes. On-budget support will continue to be contingent on improvements to accountability and audit mechanisms.

(15) We strongly welcome and equally value all other development assistance and project support that Afghanistan receives from its international partners to support Afghan National Development Priorities.

(16) We recognize the progress made under the SMAF and endorse the new set of SMART¹ SMAF indicators for implementation in 2017/18.

(17) For the period 2017-2020, international partners commit and confirm their intention to provide USD 15.2 billion (+/- EUR 13.6 billion) in support of Afghanistan's development priorities. We particularly welcome the contributions from new donors to Afghanistan as well as other announcements of bilateral assistance.

(18) We recognize the role of civil society and media in Afghanistan's development and the need to include civil society in the political processes. We welcome the Afghan civil society's contributions to the Conference and recognize also the contributions of international NGOs, both for Afghanistan's development and in partnership with Afghan civil society, including in the provision of humanitarian assistance.

(19) We recall the critical role that the private sector will play in Afghanistan's path to sustainability. We welcome the first steps being taken and intend to make greater efforts to facilitate private sector development and an enabling business and investment climate. As set out in London (2014), there is urgent need to prioritise a stronger, more consistent regulatory framework enabling a stronger and more competitive business environment, as well as investment in energy and infrastructure, agriculture and the extractive industries to help encourage private sector investment and more sustainable economic growth. This includes effective measures to counter the threat of conflict and corruption around the extractive industries. The international Community welcomes the Afghan government's commitment to encourage and provide incentives for public-private partnerships.

(20) Afghanistan's potentially large extractive industry reserves should build the economy and benefit national development. The Afghan government will take further steps to implement its commitment to the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative and supports the efforts to improve mining governance and transparency that are presented in the ANPDF. The Afghan government highlighted plans to combat illegal mineral extraction and to ensure fully transparent tendering for mine development so that the Afghan people benefit in full from natural resource development.

Section 3: Peace, Security and Regional Cooperation

(21) A secure, stable, and prosperous Afghanistan is vital to peace and stability in the region as a whole.

(22) Development and security are interconnected challenges for Afghanistan's state-building process, and need to be underpinned by genuine political support at the regional level.

(23) We remain determined to counter all forms of terrorism and violent extremism as fundamental threats to international peace and stability.

¹ Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound (SMART)

(24) Stability and security in the region are not divisible. They can only be achieved and maintained with an approach that promotes security for all states in the region.

(25) The International Community welcomes the undeterred willingness of the Afghan Government to engage with all armed groups in a political process without preconditions. The only way to a durable end to the conflict in Afghanistan is through a lasting political settlement. In order to reach a peace settlement, we remain fully committed to supporting an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process representing all Afghan citizens and their legitimate interests that preserves Afghanistan's unity, sovereignty, territorial integrity and equal rights of all Afghans under the Constitution of Afghanistan. We reaffirm that such a process must lead to the renunciation of violence and breaking of all ties to international terrorism and the respect for the Afghan Constitution including its human rights provisions, notably the rights of women and children. We welcome all initiatives to create a conducive environment for such a process, particularly the efforts undertaken by the Afghan government, and call on all parties to engage in such a process.

(26) Stressing that the stability of Afghanistan affects the stability of the entire region, we are committed to preserving the independence of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan as a democracy, bound to the rule of law and the respect of human rights as enshrined in the Afghan Constitution.

(27) We welcome the commitment of the regional and key international stakeholders to respect, support and promote a political process and its outcome in order to ensure peace, security and prosperity in Afghanistan and the wider region.

(28) Noting the increasing number of civilian casualties, we condemn all attacks targeting civilians or civilian facilities, which must be protected. We recall the responsibility of all parties to protect civilians in accordance with their obligations pursuant to International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law.

(29) We recognize the sacrifices and achievements of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) as well as the sacrifices made by the international partners. We welcome the commitments in support of the ANDSF expressed by the international partners of Afghanistan.

(30) We underline the importance of close and effective cooperation in the field of irregular migration and of the multilateral, regional and bilateral processes and political agreements in this regard, including the Joint Way Forward on Migration Issues between Afghanistan and the European Union. We are committed to effectively addressing the growing pressure of irregular migration in accordance with international commitments and obligations, including the human rights and legal rights of all migrants as recognized in international laws.

(31) We recognize the challenge to Afghanistan and the region in meeting the protracted needs of displaced people and refugees. We commend regional countries, in particular Iran and Pakistan, for their efforts in hosting millions of Afghans, in the spirit of good neighbourly relations, over several decades. In this regard, we call on the International Community to further support and assist the refugees and the countries and communities hosting and receiving them. We reaffirm our common objective to their voluntary, safe and orderly repatriation and resettlement in a timely and dignified

manner. We recognize the need to provide support and assistance, including enhancing the capacities of Afghan communities and local authorities to help returnees and internally displaced persons. Root causes of displacement must be addressed.

(32) We reaffirm our joint commitment and the need for a sustained and integrated approach in effectively reducing the illicit production and trafficking of narcotics and precursor products, and fighting organized crime, including money laundering, corruption and the financing of terrorism. We also note the importance of continuing our important work in treating and rehabilitating those with substance abuse disorders. We underline the need for renewed efforts to support countries concerned in addressing these challenges within relevant regional frameworks including through the implementation of the Afghan National Drug Action Plan.

(33) We welcome the important initiatives for regional connectivity, notably in the frameworks of the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA) and the Heart of Asia Confidence Building Measures to further improve transit, transport and energy corridors and facilitate increased trade throughout the region. We welcome continued efforts on implementing the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement and welcome the progress on projects such as CASA-1000, TAPI gas pipeline, and important regional railway infrastructure projects. We welcome the signing of the Chabahar Agreement by Afghanistan, Iran and India and welcome the agreement on the Lapis Lazuli Transit Trade & Transport Route.

(34) Following the ministerial meeting of the Heart of Asia/Istanbul Process in Pakistan in 2015, which allowed for an important advance in the regional political and security dialogue, the International Community looks forward to maintaining and deepening this cooperation at the upcoming meeting in Amritsar, India on 4th December 2016. We appreciate the Turkish government for the organization of the RECCA Business Forum in Istanbul in November 2016 and Turkmen government for convening the 7th RECCA in Ashgabat in 2017.

Section 4: The Way Forward

(35) We look forward to the Senior Officials Meeting in 2017 and the next Ministerial Meeting on Afghanistan in 2018.

(36) The Afghan Government expressed its appreciation to the European Union for co-hosting the Brussels Conference and the Participants for their continued extraordinary support for the security and development of Afghanistan.

(37) Participants affirm the central role played by the United Nations in Afghanistan, including their role in coordinating international support.