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At its meeting on 14 May 2012, the Council adopted Council Conclusions set out in the Annex to this note.

## **COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS**

**on**

### **Afghanistan**

1. The Council welcomes the progress made in Afghanistan's transition process. The upcoming international meetings in Chicago on 20 and 21 May, Kabul on 14 June and Tokyo on 8 July offer the opportunity to shape the further course of transition and international engagement after 2014. The Council affirms the importance of the international community taking a holistic view of post-2014 engagement, given the correlation between security and long-term development in Afghanistan.
2. Recalling its conclusions of 14 November 2011, the Council reaffirms the long-term commitment of the EU and its Member States to support Afghanistan during transition and the decade of transformation. This commitment requires a reciprocal and genuine effort by the Afghan authorities to meet the reform obligations agreed at the Kabul and Bonn Conferences. The Council welcomes the opening of negotiations on the Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development, which should provide a framework for relations in the coming years and strengthen mutual accountability.

3. The EU expects the Afghan authorities to reassure the international community regarding implementation of their commitments to improve political and economic governance.

The Council calls on the Afghan Government to ensure the holding of inclusive and credible presidential and parliamentary elections. The EU stands ready to continue supporting Afghan efforts to reform the electoral system and to strengthen the independent electoral institutions.

The EU underlines the importance of an Afghan-led, inclusive peace process and an outcome that respects the principles set out in the Bonn Conference Conclusions of December 2011.

The Council underlines the role of an independent and active civil society for the future of Afghanistan and welcomes the considerable development and scope of non-governmental organizations in the country. The Council recommends to build on the dialogue process initiated at the Bonn conference. Progress on these matters should be regularly evaluated and reviewed.

The Council calls on the Afghan Government to guarantee respect for human rights, in particular those of women and children, and to increase the opportunities for women to participate fully in the labour force.

The Council attaches importance to reinforcing the justice sector, which is essential as the counterpart of a strengthened civilian police force; as a guarantee that human rights will be respected; and in order to establish a legal system capable of protecting the rights of economic operators.

The Council also urges the Afghan Government to act on the IMF's recommendations following the collapse of the Kabul Bank, and to take steps to improve its public financial management, including establishing a transparent system of flows of public finances from donors to central government and from central government to provinces, and advancing public administration reform. In this context, it is essential that Afghanistan uses international support effectively to achieve fiscal sustainability. Undertaking the necessary steps to facilitate adequate private sector development to sustain the economic income of Afghanistan is an important prerequisite for long term engagement of the international donor community. Without adequate economic development shared by the population, all other progress in the country may be hampered.

4. The NATO Summit and other international meetings in Chicago on 20 and 21 May will notably focus on long-term support to Afghanistan's army and police. Capable, sustainable and affordable Afghan National Security Forces will be key to increasing security in Afghanistan reinforcing the confidence of the Afghan people, the international community and external investors in Afghanistan's institutions of state. An adequate level of security, including for our personnel, will also remain vital for the EU and other donors to be able to deliver assistance effectively throughout the country.
5. Planning for the security sector must ensure that the size , structure and missions of the Afghan National Police allow for a refocus on civilian policing and rule of law capabilities. The Council recalls that assuring the professionalism and quality of the Afghan police is a higher priority than funding sufficient numbers alone. Fair and impartial policing is essential if human rights, especially those of women and children, are to be promoted. The Council invites the Afghan Government to endorse a professionalisation plan, specifying the measures and resources for its implementation.

6. Civilian policing will remain the key focus of EU assistance in the security sector. The Council reiterates the importance of continued cooperation and coordination between EUPOL, NATO and Member States' training missions throughout Afghanistan. The Council recalls its previous agreement to an extension in principle of the mandate of EUPOL AFGHANISTAN until the end of 2014. The Council reiterates the EU's commitment to support Afghanistan's efforts in strengthening policing and the rule of law beyond 2014 and intends to address this matter at an early date.
7. The Council restates its support for the 'Heart of Asia' process initiated at the Istanbul conference in November 2011 and welcomes progress by countries in the region in defining confidence building measures to be agreed at the 14 June Kabul Ministerial Conference. The Council reiterates that the initiative must be owned by the countries of the region. Continued and enhanced regional cooperation will be an important element in increasing stability and prosperity in Afghanistan and the surrounding region. It notes the conclusions of the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA) Ministerial meeting in Dushanbe on 26-27 March. Greater stability will support the continued voluntary return and sustainable reintegration of the Afghan refugee population as part of a comprehensive regional approach.
8. As agreed in November 2011, the EU will engage actively with partners to support strengthened regional political and economic cooperation. The Council reiterates its readiness to support confidence-building measures where there is both political and financial buy-in from the countries of the region, in particular in areas where the EU has proven competence, such as strengthening capacities in border management, counter-narcotics and supporting collaborative efforts to promote trade, economic cooperation and development. Taking into account the results of the Kabul Conference, the EU will further consider, in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, the possible development of ways to deepen its regional engagement in the framework of a comprehensive approach.

9. The EU welcomes the Declaration of the 3rd Ministerial Conference of the Paris Pact Initiative in Vienna on 16 February, and emphasises the importance of continued and enhanced efforts at national, regional and global level to combat the production and trafficking of illicit drugs.
10. The Tokyo Conference should focus on advancing existing mutual commitments by the international community and the Afghan Government to ensure the viability of the Afghan state up to transition and throughout the Decade of Transformation. For their part, the Afghan Government must make progress against IMF benchmarks and other vital governance reforms. The EU will advocate a progressive approach in the form of a roadmap, matching donors' alignment with the Afghan Government's national priority programmes with progress on issues such as governance and human rights. Progress should be regularly evaluated and reviewed.
11. At Tokyo, it will be important to consider future modalities for donor funding as the tasks of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams and the Transition Support Teams are progressively reduced. The EU and its Member States will strive to coordinate more efficiently their assistance to Afghanistan. The EU will also actively promote better use of international mechanisms, including the International Contact Group the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB) and the International Police Coordination Board (IPCB), in coordination with UNAMA. The EU and its Member States will seek to establish common positions for these meetings. The EU will review its action in Afghanistan following the Tokyo conference. The EU will promote synergies among Member States in order to enhance its impact in Afghanistan.
12. The EU intends to reallocate an increased share of its bilateral support for governance in Afghanistan for 2012-2013 for the Afghan National Police through the Law and Order Trust Fund (LOTFA). It is essential to ensure that LOTFA is efficiently, transparently and accountably managed.

13. In line with the EU and its Member States' long term commitment, the EU will continue to prioritise Afghanistan, making an enhanced contribution to support for the country, in the context of fulfilment by the Afghan authorities of their reform obligations agreed at the Kabul and Bonn Conferences. The EU will maintain a balance between support to governance, including significant support to an effective Afghan civilian police force and the rule of law, and also to the social and productive sectors, with a continued emphasis on capacity building. The Council expects this to be accompanied by increased support from other donors.
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