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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: Council conclusions on Afghanistan

At its meeting on 20 July 2015, the Council adopted the Council conclusions as set out in the annex to this note.

Council conclusions on Afghanistan

1. The Council endorses the first annual report of the European Union (EU) Afghanistan strategy 2014-16. The EU appreciates the efforts made by the EUSR in Afghanistan in implementing the strategy and reaffirms its continued commitment to the goal of the strategy, namely the development of Afghanistan's institutions to provide the resilience needed to safeguard progress to date and provide the platform for a more effective and ultimately sustainable Afghan state. The Council welcomes progress on the Cooperation Agreement for Partnership and Development, the broad areas of cooperation it identifies and the framework it will provide for long-term engagement with Afghanistan.

2. The EU welcomes the concerted outreach by the Afghan leadership to countries in the region to increase cooperation in facilitating an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process as a foundation for peace and stability in both Afghanistan and the region. The EU calls on all countries in the region to support an inclusive settlement that eschews the violence which continues to cause suffering for so many Afghans, disavows any link with terrorism or terrorist groups and respects human rights, in particular the rights of women and children. The Council welcomes the first Human Rights Dialogue between the EU and Afghanistan which took place on 15 June 2015. It is of paramount importance that women's rights are fully respected and that the representation and participation of women in all political processes is ensured, in particular in the peace process. The Council welcomes the launch of the National Action Plan on 30 June to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. The EU will support the government and civil society financially and diplomatically to implement the plan.

3. The capability of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) is vital in containing the insurgency and laying the foundation for greater security. The EU remains committed to assist with the professionalisation of civilian policing, in close coordination with the Afghan authorities and international partners. This assistance builds on results from the EU police mission to Afghanistan (EUPOL), which has been extended until the end of 2016, and the activities and substantial financial support provided by the EU and Member States.

4. The EU condemns the insurgent groups that continue to direct attacks against Afghan civilians, democratic institutions and civil society, causing record numbers of casualties. It is vital that humanitarian aid agencies and aid workers are allowed safe and unhindered access to the most vulnerable affected populations in line with basic humanitarian principles. The EU stresses the importance of a continued strong UN presence across the country.

5. The increase in migration flows from Afghanistan is concerning. The EU encourages the National Unity Government to take more effective measures to manage these flows and to facilitate the readmission of irregular migrants. EU financial assistance will continue to address the root causes of migration, such as poverty and instability, so as to reduce the incentives for illegal migration and to combat smuggling networks. The Council invites the European Commission, in close cooperation with the HRVP, to examine the feasibility of engaging in a comprehensive dialogue on migration issues, in line with the European Agenda on Migration.

6. The EU believes that increased regional economic cooperation, in particular the development of intra-regional trade and infrastructure, in addition to agreed frameworks for the more efficient exploitation of shared natural resources, will provide benefits for all countries in the region. The Council invites the European Commission to examine the possibility of making EIB financing in Afghanistan eligible under an EU guarantee, in particular with the aim of contributing to regional prosperity and connectivity, given the improved prospects for regional cooperation. As well as increasing prosperity, improved economic cooperation can provide an important basis for stability. The EU actively supports the 'Heart of Asia' process as well as the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA), and encourages all parties to pursue tangible outcomes from the Ministerial meetings in Islamabad and Kabul later this year.

7. The EU strongly supports the vision for Afghanistan's future set out by President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah in the 'Realising Self-Reliance' paper presented at the London conference in December 2014. It is now urgent that the National Unity Government (NUG) take immediate and concrete actions to deliver on the reform commitments made to the Afghan people. The EU urges the NUG to substantiate its vision into a prioritised plan for implementation, including measures to: advance electoral reform; tackle corruption and the threats of drugs and organised crime; reinvigorate economic growth and stimulate private sector development; attract investment and generate revenue; ensure the effective interworking of all components of the formal justice system to better uphold the rule of law; and foster human rights, in particular the rights of women and children. Such a plan should also be reflected in a strategic and refreshed Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, with a reinforced incentive component linked to reform implementation, under which the international community continues to provide exceptional levels of support, including more than EUR 1.25 billion committed by the EU and Member States in 2015.

Afghanistan – Review of the EU Strategy for Afghanistan 2014-2016

Introduction

Since the adoption of the EU Strategy by the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) in June 2014, the new Afghan Government has set out to tackle the array of prolonged political, economic and security challenges and has provided the international community with a partner committed to reform.

Progress in achieving the objectives of the EU strategy for Afghanistan has been uneven. Afghanistan has seen the first ever democratic transfer of power in the country's history. But the protracted process of negotiating an accepted outcome to the presidential election absorbed much of the focus that might otherwise have been directed to further advancing the objectives of the strategy. The formation of the National Unity Government (NUG) in September 2014 was a critical step in providing the international community with a partner committed to addressing an array of prolonged political, economic and security challenges. The 'Realizing Self-Reliance' vision set out by President Ghani at the London conference in December 2014 provides a comprehensive programme of reform for the NUG to address, in large part, the goals and objectives of the EU strategy. The substantiation of the reform programme by the NUG ahead of the planned Senior Officials' Meeting in Kabul later this year should be the basis for coordinated international support the development of more effective and ultimately sustainable Afghan state.

Context

The inauguration of the National Unity Government (NUG) in September 2014 marked the first ever democratic transfer of power in Afghanistan's history. The formation of the NUG was the result of a difficult political process that merged a wide range of political, ethnic and tribal interests. The EU and Member States (MS) supported the elections and the observation of the audit of the election results.

Politically, the protracted negotiation of an accepted outcome to the presidential elections absorbed considerable focus and energy. The delays in inaugurating a new executive and the challenges in having a full Cabinet of Ministers have resulted in a lack of governance and political leadership for much of the period. Economically, the political uncertainties of 2014 exacerbated economic stagnation, declining revenues and the consequent fiscal crisis. Significant steps to reinvigorate economic growth and revenues have yet to be taken. The growth outlook for 2015 remains weak and diminished revenues mean that the risk of further budget crises remains high. In spite of Afghan and international efforts to date, opium production has continued to expand. This has further complicated the security situation in rural areas, with increasing linkages between drug criminals, local warlords and insurgents. On the security front, the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) have so far coped with the transition, but faced serious challenges following the drawdown of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) while still struggling to develop a more sustainable security strategy. Meanwhile the withdrawal of international combat troops has led to increased targeting of Afghan civilians by insurgent groups. This resulted in civilian casualty figures reaching an all-time high in 2014. President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah have declared peace and security to be a top priority and ensured that both the US-Afghan Bilateral Security Agreement and the NATO Status of Forces Agreement were signed, enabling the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission to follow on from the ISAF military mission as scheduled. The NUG has attempted to kick-start a peace and reconciliation process by improving relations with Pakistan, trying to engage the Taliban in peace talks, and ensuring the support of regional partners. President Ghani's regional outreach has aimed at encouraging regional actors to review relations with Afghanistan and at reinvigorating trade and cooperation on resource management.

The formation of the NUG has provided the international community with a partner committed to reform. At the London conference in December 2014, the NUG presented its vision for Realising Self-Reliance, including steps to improve security and political stability, tackle corruption, improve governance, restore fiscal sustainability, and promote growth. With the Afghan Cabinet agreed and in place, the focus of the NUG now needs to shift to implementing the reforms and changes promised to Afghan citizens. Prospects for progress against the objectives of the EU strategy in the coming year are promising.

In London, the NUG and the international community renewed their commitment to the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF) and agreed to refresh it at the Senior Officials Meeting is scheduled to take place in Kabul (September 2015). The EU and MS are ready to support and incentivise the implementation of the government's reform agenda.

The new Afghan government has reinvigorated negotiations to conclude the Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development (CAPD) with the EU, which will provide the legal framework for the EU's long-term engagement.

(a) Promoting peace, security and regional stability

Objective: Promoting peace, security and regional stability, by advocating an inclusive peace process, mitigating threats from drugs, trafficking and organised crime, tackling illegal migration and supporting the development of a professional and accountable civilian police service

The Taliban have continued to reject involvement in peace talks and maintained a high-intensity insurgency. It is possible that the Afghan government will succeed in engaging with the Taliban at some level over the next year. But it is unlikely that a political settlement will ensue in 2015. The insurgency is likely to test the strength and resolve of Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) with the aim of increasing their leverage in any peace talks. Further intra-Taliban fragmentation is likely to deepen. If the Taliban do engage in peace talks, other insurgent groups, including so-called Islamic State, might try to fill the void.

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President Ghani's regional outreach has aimed at encouraging regional actors to review relations with Afghanistan and has advocated increased economic cooperation. With regional actors recognising the need for enhanced regional connectivity, there is the prospect of real progress being made over the next year on large-scale regional energy/infrastructure projects and trade/transit agreements, specifically those which could also impact on the overall strategic situation in Afghanistan.

The ANDSF performed well overall during the elections and the period of the security transition. But ANDSF reform efforts have remained paralyzed due to the lack of political leadership. The NUG has prioritised ministerial reform, accountability and sustainability, including a strengthened civilian police approach and cooperation with the justice system. The continued need to fight the insurgency may complicate achieving sustainable reform. The NUG have recognised the negative impact on security and development of criminal networks fuelled by narcotics and other illicit sources of income. Overall limited progress was made on tackling organised crime and opium production grew strongly in 2014.

Despite significant investment in supporting the resettlement and reintegration of returnees from Iran and Pakistan, less than 17,000 Afghan refugees voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan in 2014. i.e. over 50% less than in 2013, primarily due to the overall unfavourable political and economic situation. Following an increase in the number of arrests, detentions, and evictions of Afghans in Pakistan after the Peshawar school attack in late 2014, 13,045 registered Afghan refugees have voluntarily repatriated, over 50,000 non-registered Afghans have returned, and approximately 4,500 Afghans have been deported in the first months of 2015. The expiry of the temporary legal stay permit for 1.2 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan in December 2015 is a concern as the pressure for repatriation increases. A graduated return plan for refugees from Pakistan is under negotiation. The Afghan government is also engaged with Iran on the eventual return of Afghan refugees.

The EU and MS are engaged in political dialogue with Afghan interlocutors and regional partners to promote an **inclusive Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process leading to a political settlement in which all parties eschew violence, disavow any link with terrorism, and respect human rights, in particular the rights of women.** The EU and MS support UNAMA's role and efforts in support of peace and reconciliation. The EU and MS continue to engage with the Afghan government, the High Peace Council, civil society and other groups to emphasise importance of an inclusive peace and reconciliation process. The EU has highlighted that it is ready to financially support activities towards developing the capacity of women to participate in the peace process once the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 on women, peace, and security has been launched.

The EU and MS invest significant political capital in interactions with all neighbouring countries, both through existing regional fora and bilateral interactions, to support **political and economic cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours, supporting mutually reinforcing cooperation initiatives with neighbouring countries and international organisations.** The EU and MS continue to advocate neighbouring countries to invest political and economic capital in regional cooperation. The EU and MS participate actively in the Heart of Asia (Istanbul) process which, from the beginning, aimed at promoting Afghanistan-centred regional cooperation. The EU and MS participated in the Ministerial meeting hosted by China in October 2014. The EU and MS are actively supporting several confidence building measures (Disaster management, Counter narcotics, Trade, Commerce and Investment opportunities) as a means to boost economic development and peace and stability in the region. The EU's commitment to regional cooperation is substantiated by support to capacity building in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to lead and coordinate the Heart of Asia process and other regional cooperation/integration processes. In the margins of the London Conference in December 2014, the UK hosted a high-level discussion with regional countries on fostering regional economic cooperation.

Progress on regional energy cooperation, for example on CASA1000 and the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline, was supported by EU and MS advocacy activities. The European Investment Bank (EIB) has also supported the development of CASA1000 (Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan part). The EU and MS will continue to advocate for: the full implementation of trade transit agreements, such as the Afghan-Pakistan-Tajikistan transit/trade agreement (APTTA); progress on the TAPI pipeline; (and the development of the Chabahar Port project in Iran). The EU and MS have invested significantly in political and financial support for the building of government capacity to control its borders and better enforce its customs regulations. The EU-Border Management in Northern Afghanistan program facilitates cross-border institutional cooperation and coordination, joint training and capacity building activities for Afghanistan and its northern neighbours. The EU and MS also support the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) which continues to contribute to increased regional connectivity through the reduction of trade barriers. The EU and MS also advocated for the RECCA VI (Regional Economic Cooperation Conference for Afghanistan) conference to take place.

The EU and MS **support the regional solution strategy for the reintegration of Afghan refugees, based on principles of voluntary repatriation and sustainability.** Voluntary return and reintegration of Afghan refugees from Pakistan and Iran is supported mostly through UNHCR, both for the political dialogue on asylum space in host countries and the coordination of humanitarian and development assistance. The EU continued to support basic service provision for the most vulnerable refugees, the resettlement of 3,690 returnee and IDP families through shelters and the improvement of livelihoods of over 30,000 people, including through UNHCR. National capacities were strengthened in areas of protection and over 8,000 people trained in 2014. The EU and MS continue to support sustainable economic and social integration of IDPs and returnees in Afghanistan, yet progress on the implementation of the National IDP Policy has been slow. The EU and MS will advocate for a sensible and graduated plan for the return of refugees from Pakistan.

The EU and MS contributed towards **strengthening international cooperation to address problems caused by uncontrolled and illegal immigration, primarily to the Afghan neighbourhood, and also to Europe, and to facilitate returns to Afghanistan while respecting the 1951 Geneva Convention** relating to the Status of Refugees. The EU assists Afghanistan under the Silk Routes Partnership for Migration (Budapest Process) to increase the migration management capacity of the government. Policy dialogue and engagement with key ministries, including the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, was stepped up in 2014. Continued capacity building is foreseen, alongside the opening of a migration information centre intended to prevent illegal migration and trafficking while improving the potential development benefits of mobility. The EU and MS cooperate on migration related issues, including readmission.

The EU and MS continue to be engaged in efforts to **strengthen Afghan-led efforts to increase the quality and sustainability of civilian policing, as an integral part of the justice system, leading to wider rule of law.** The EU, EUPOL and MS continued to be engaged - often in a leading role - in the political and technical dialogue to gradually develop the Afghan National Police (ANP) into a professional civilian police service. The EUPOL mission has been extended until the end of 2016. Some of EUPOL functions will be continued through a reinforced EUSR office from 2015, building on EUPOL's achievements in the areas of justice and rule of law. The EU and MS are engaged in a dialogue with the government to increase Afghan leadership and ownership in Ministry of Interior (MoI) reform, anti-corruption and fiscal sustainability. EUPOL and bilateral efforts by MS, such as Germany's German Police Project Team (GPPT) and the United Kingdom's Strategic Support to the MoI (SSMI) project, continue to provide strategic advice to MoI leadership. The EU and MS coordinate with other donors and the Afghan government through the Oversight and Coordination Body (OCB), currently Co-chaired by Germany and the Ministry of Finance, and through the International Police Coordination Board, whose secretariat benefits from international experts seconded by MS. Discussions on the future of the UNDP-administered Law and Order Trust Fund (LOTFA) are ongoing with the aim of reinforcing Afghan ownership of the programme and its reform objectives. The EU and MS support the restructuring of LOTFA to provide more focused and programmatic support to MoI reform, police professionalisation and civilianisation, while increasing oversight over the payroll management. Supported by the EU and MS, LOTFA has developed and supported the implementation of the MoI Female Police Strategy and is supporting Police Women Councils to increase coverage and gender mainstreaming throughout the system. LOTFA also supports the new government's reform agenda, specifically on the civilianisation of the MoI and the integration of the security sector institutions in whole-of-government reforms, including public financial management and public administration reform.

In spite of Afghan and international efforts to date, opium production has continued to expand. This has further complicated the security situation in rural areas, with increasing linkages between drug criminals, local war-lords and insurgents. The EU and MS have ensured that counter-narcotics is a central component of its programmes in Afghanistan, in order to **strengthen Afghan and regional efforts to reduce organised crime and drug production, trafficking and demand**. The EU and MS aim to address the counter-narcotics issue through a comprehensive approach by supporting: capacity building for law enforcement and the judiciary; border management; public health awareness and outcomes; and alternative livelihoods, aimed at reducing the dependency of subsistence farmers on narcotic crops. The EU and MS promote enhanced regional dialogue, cross-border coordination and capacity building activities on drug-related issues via UNODC's regional programme in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries in the field of law enforcement, cooperation in criminal matters, and prevention and treatment of addiction among vulnerable groups. The Ministry of Counter-Narcotics is developing a counter-narcotics strategy which foresees a comprehensive inter-ministerial coordination mechanism. The EU and MS plan to support the implementation the strategy.

(b) Reinforcing Democracy

Objective: Reinforcing democracy: functioning democracy needs to be embedded through democratic oversight at national, provincial and district levels, inclusive and transparent elections, and capacity-building in key institutions of governance;

The 2014 Presidential elections marked the first peaceful and democratic transfer of power in Afghan history and resulted in the formation of a National Unity Government. The first round of elections witnessed a number of significant improvements from previous elections. The state showed increased capacity to conduct the first Afghan-led election in exceptionally challenging circumstances. The elections saw the implementation of a new electoral legal framework compliant with international standards. Impressive voter education activities encouraged increased participation of women (37% of votes cast). The second round saw significant irregularities which necessitated an unprecedented full recount of the votes observed by the International community. Following the protracted post-election period, the NUG agreement committed to establish an Electoral Reform Commission (ERC) to undertake reforms before holding future elections. The parliamentary elections scheduled for April 2015 will be postponed to 2016. The ERC has yet to [be launched officially and] start its work.

The Afghan Parliament has continued to consolidate its functions to hold the executive accountable. A reform plan has been adopted by Parliament. It includes actions aimed at increasing the capacity of Parliament's leadership to undertake reforms. Parliament has passed the Parliamentary Service Act to establish a Parliamentary Service, which is a step towards enhancing its autonomy.

With the majority of the Afghan population living in rural areas, the NUG has identified service delivery and improvements to sub-national governance as priorities. Yet, [appointments of governors,] the reform backlog, tackling corruption, building better governance, and improvements to public service delivery in the provinces still have to be addressed. The Provincial Council elections of 2014 resulted in invigorated lobbying activities for increased oversight responsibilities for Provincial Councils over local administration.

The EU and MS supported the presidential and provincial council elections politically and financially, focussing on the implementation of **a robust electoral architecture and electoral procedures**. Support through UNDP focussed on reinforcing the institutional, technical, and operational capacity of the Afghan electoral institutions both at central and at sub-national level. The EU Election Assessment Team (EAT) consisted of up to 410 observers, including a number of participants from EU MS Embassies in Kabul. The EAT participated in the observation of the unprecedented audit of the results of the run-off of the Presidential election. The EAT's overall assessment noted progress in terms of electoral administration, but also highlighted integrity and transparency shortcomings which hampered the credibility of the electoral process. The EAT's recommendations in the final report focused on improvements to the electoral system ahead of the Parliamentary elections. The EU and MS will continue to use them during the political dialogue and while planning financial support, including projects supporting democracy and human rights. The EU and MS also supported the deployment of domestic election observers and the development of domestic electoral observation capacity. The EU continues to support a pilot project in Kabul for the use of electronic national ID cards (e-tazkira). This will inform any national roll-out. The pilot project has so far registered 100,000 people in Kabul.

The EU and MS plan to politically and financially support the parliamentary elections – provided appropriate measures are put in place to improve the quality of the next election – with the objective of achieving **credible parliamentary elections in 2016, with outcomes broadly accepted by Afghans**. Ahead of the next elections, the question of the long-term sustainability of the Afghan electoral system needs to be satisfactorily addressed. The EU and MS continue to push to enhance the integrity of the electoral system to restore the credibility of the election management bodies. The EU has offered support to the Electoral Reform Commission. Looking ahead to the parliamentary and, potentially, the district council elections, key donors have been actively involved in thematic discussions on voter registration options, integrity and financial sustainability, based on lessons learnt from the 2014 elections. Fostering women's representation and participation in the parliamentary elections will be a priority for the EU and MS. The EU and MS will continue to support a gender-sensitive approach to election procedures and especially public outreach, to achieve greater participation of women.

The EU and MS are supporting institutional and capacity building of the Parliament through UNDP to achieve **greater accountability of the executive through improved parliamentary and independent oversight**. The EU and MS are supporting institutional and capacity development of the Parliament and will provide training for newly elected parliamentarians through UNDP. The EU and MS also provide capacity development to female provincial councillors.

The EU and MS are supporting the **building the capacity of sub-national governance, focusing on reducing corruption and increasing accountability in order to improve service delivery and budget administration** and is actively engaged in the policy dialogue with the central and sub-national government on reform efforts. The EU and MS are supporting institutional and capacity building of sub-national governance including advocating for the adoption and implementation of an improved legal framework for sub-national governance. The EU and MS also continue to advocate for accountable and transparent financial structures at sub-national level including the implementation of improved provincial planning and budgeting processes. Increasing accountability will also require strengthening of local governance structures, including Provincial Councils and District Councils. The EU and MS are ready to support District Council elections if these are held together with the Parliamentary elections.

The EU and MS continue to push the government to improve Afghanistan's anti-corruption efforts including through credible asset verification of high-ranking officials, the recovery of the stolen Kabul Bank assets, and the passing of sound anti-corruption legislation, in line with IMF recommendations. In order to increase accountability and transparency, the EU and MS will advocate and support the development and rapid implementation of a new comprehensive governmental anti-corruption strategy aimed at the establishment of effective, empowered and accountable anti-corruption bodies, which includes all key stakeholders from government, parliament, judiciary, media, and civil society.

The EU and MS continue to support the role media and civil society in holding government accountable, especially in promoting respect for human rights and democratic reform. The EU has launched a broad consultation with over 120 civil society organisations (CSO) to analyse the state of civil society in Afghanistan, conduct a self-assessment and to help define priorities for future support to CSOs. The findings will be presented in the EU Roadmap for engagement with civil society.

(c) Encouraging economic and human development

Objective: Encouraging economic and human development including creating a transparent economic framework to encourage investment, raise revenue, allocate finances, strengthen resilience and improve access to health and education, including for the most vulnerable segments of the population;

Afghanistan has made significant human development advances over the past 10 years, but sustained progress will be necessary to reach regional norms. The last comprehensive National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) from 2011-12 indicated improvements in education, health, access to safe drinking water and gender equality, but stagnation in food security and poverty levels. The 2014 Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey (ALCS) indicated a deterioration against the MDG indicator of gender equality of educational opportunity. i.e. fewer girls attended primary education compared to 2011-12. International support has led to improvements in the health of the population and progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, particularly in the area of maternal and child health. Yet territorial and social inequalities remain in determining access to health services.

Stagnating growth, fiscal crisis, declining revenues and corruption have continued to undermine self-reliance of the Afghan state. The fiscal crisis in 2014 led to the accumulation of arrears and exceptional financing needs. At the London conference, the NUG set out the 'Realizing Self-reliance' vision as the overarching reform goal. In London, the NUG and the international community renewed their commitment to the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF) and agreed to refresh it at the Senior Officials Meeting scheduled to take place in Kabul (autumn 2015). Despite early signals aimed at tackling corruption, such as the reopening of the Kabul Bank case, significant steps have yet to be taken to reinvigorate economic growth, private sector development and revenues. The growth outlook for 2015 remains weak.

Afghan public financial management (PFM) continues to suffer from corruption and weak systems, despite maintaining a PFM mechanism that ranked relatively well in 2013 against other Low Income Countries, as ascertained by the 2012 Open Budget Index and the 2013 PEFA assessment report. At the beginning of 2015, revenue figures have recovered slightly, compared to the previous year, but fell short of the budgetary targets. In March 2015, a new IMF staff monitored programme was agreed, including steps to address the revenue situation. There remains a high risk of a recurring fiscal crisis in 2015.

Agriculture remains the source of employment for 80% of the population. The 2014 agriculture harvest was strong for the third year in a row. Yet the protracted political and security context affected rural economic performance negatively, including employment opportunities for women, and saw an increased dependency of subsistence farmers on narcotic crops. Opium production grew strongly in 2014.

The EU and MS support Afghanistan to achieve **increased human development, including for the most vulnerable segments of the population, in particular in education and health**. EU MS continued to support primary and secondary education, higher education institutions and technical and vocational education, with a specific focus on the education of women and girls. The EU and MS support the health sector towards improvements of the health status of the population in line with the MDGs. The focus is on the access to quality primary health services, and availability of health professionals, particularly in the areas of nutrition, mental health, and disability. The EU and MS will continue to work with other donors towards a more coherent sector wide approach for health. The EU has continued to support the NRVA to inform human development-related activities in Afghanistan.

During the fiscal crisis in 2014 the EU and MS engaged in policy dialogue and technical assistance towards **improved public financial management** and the development of a new PFM Roadmap aimed at outlining reforms in areas such as enhanced integrity and accountability, spending effectiveness and sustainable human resources capacity. The EU and MS have continued to advocate for the fight against corruption to be mainstreamed into all sectors, including by improving internal and external controls, conducting vulnerability to corruption assessments, and PFM reforms. The EU and MS continue to press for the implementation of the provincial budgeting policy linked to a provincial planning process. The EU and MS also continue to support the work of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Committee.

The EU and MS have engaged in policy dialogue with both the outgoing and incoming administrations to support the **stronger financial self-sustainability of the Afghan state, through increased revenue generation** and tax collection. Discussions focused on immediate action to address the fiscal situation, including the implementation of austerity measures and the adoption of a national budget for 2015 with more realistic revenue expectations. The EU and MS also engaged in discussions with the Parliament ahead of the adoption of the national budget. In the context of the TMAF, the EU and MS worked with others in the international community to successfully advocate for the adoption of the VAT law, the Mining law, accession to the EITI, adoption of the Anti-Money Laundering and Combatting the Financing of Terrorism legislation, and other revenue generating measures. The EU and MS will continue to press for their swift implementation. Further, the EU and MS have supported the agreement of a new IMF staff monitored programme and has continued to urge the government to implement and stay 'on track' with the reforms recommended by the IMF. The EU and MS have continued to support Afghanistan's integration in the world economy, including accession to the WTO.

The EU and MS have supported access to rural areas, agriculture services, and integrated water resources management aimed at **stimulation of the rural economy to generate more jobs and reduce dependence on poppy**, improved food security and revenue generation. The EU and MS will continue to advance and deepen the policy dialogue to move towards an agriculture sector-wide approach, in alignment with national policies.

(d) Fostering the rule of law and human rights

Objective: Fostering the rule of law and respect for human rights by advocating respect for human rights (including in particular the full implementation of statutory protections for the rights of women and girls), supporting greater equality before the law of all citizens and assisting with the development of a comprehensive framework to strengthen and reform the justice sector.

The human rights situation in Afghanistan remains worrying. In 2014, UNAMA reports indicated a record number of civilian casualties caused by the ongoing armed conflict. The death penalty was carried out in six cases and there were cases of inhumane punishment by public flogging. Serious war crimes committed during the past decades of war and armed conflicts have not been prosecuted. Reports have indicated that torture took place in detention facilities and abhorrent discriminatory practices against women and girls, such as giving girls away as payment to settle disputes, forced and underage marriages are still widespread.

The NUG acknowledged many of these issues in the Realising Self-Reliance paper and have committed to support human rights and the rights of women and children in particular. In late 2014, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) retained its 'A status' following the implementation of recommendations made by the ICC, including steps taken by the government to include funding for the AIHRC in the national budget. The Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) law is still in force. But implementation of the EVAW law is still lagging behind with varying results across the country. Work is ongoing on whether and how to include the EVAW Law penal provisions in the penal code. A Law prohibiting the recruitment of children to the ANDSF has been passed and work on a Child Act is ongoing. The National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325) aimed at strengthening women's participation, protection of women, prevention of violence against women, and women's access to relief and recovery services is expected to be launched [in May 2015/in coming months].

There is still widespread corruption and distrust in the statutory legal system. Women especially continue to face serious problems in accessing justice. This leads Afghans to continue to turn to the informal justice system. There is a lack of justice providers with an appropriate legal background and awareness of the existing laws and the legal aid system continues to be insufficient. A lack of political leadership and cooperation among the justice sector institutions has continued to hamper substantive justice reform. The NUG has taken some important initial steps in addressing the reform backlog in the justice sector: the controversial Chief Justice was retired, the Kabul Bank case reopened, allegedly corrupt officials suspended, and a review of qualifications of judicial personnel started. The second Vice-President is facilitating the preparation of a justice reform plan to more coherently address the wider rule of law reform, including reform bottlenecks, legal education and corruption. A law to regulate relations between informal and formal justice is under preparation.

Since Taliban regime was ousted in 2001, there have been great achievements in the field of freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, and freedom of the media. But due to more recent violent attacks against journalists and human rights defenders, there is now some degree of self-censorship. In 2014, there was a 60% increase in violence against journalists and 8 journalists were killed. But both the President and the Chief Executive have committed to protect the media.

The EU and MS continue to advocate **advancing human rights, in particular the rights of women and children** and to address cases of major human rights violations, notably as regards civilian casualties, the death penalty, women's rights and children's rights through political dialogue, advocacy, public statements and demarches. The Afghan government has agreed to hold a local Human Rights Dialogue with the EU in 2015. The EU and MS coordinate human rights actions in particular with regard to ERAW Law implementation, technical support to the government on the NAP 1325, implementation of the National Action Plan for Women (NAPWA) and contributed towards ensuring the AIHRC retained its 'A' status. The EU and MS repeatedly emphasised the need for women's participation in the elections and in political and economic life in general, particularly in leading government positions. The EU and MS had several meetings with the government in order to have the moratorium on the death penalty re-established. The EU and MS continue to be a key donor championing human rights through its various programmes as well as programmes to fund civil society organisations.

The EU and MS **support all components of the formal justice sector in working together more effectively in a more independent, efficient, less corrupt and accessible way, better upholding the principles of the rule of law.** In response to reinvigorated governmental efforts, the EU and MS are looking to strengthen engagement with the justice sector once a sound strategy is put in place and counterparts have been appointed. The EU support to justice reform will be strengthened by the reinforcement of the EUSR office building on EUPOL activities in the rule of law sector.

As serious war crimes committed during the past decades of war and armed conflicts have not been prosecuted, the EU and MS have continued to **advocate for an end to the culture of impunity for serious war crimes and human rights abuses.** The EU and MS have raised the issue of transitional justice and the International Criminal Court with the Afghan government. The EU and MS continue to contact government officials centrally and in the provinces to combat impunity in specific human rights cases. The EU and MS have pushed for the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment to be ratified and for the reservations to the Optional Protocol of the Convention against Torture to be removed.

The EU and MS continue to support Afghanistan to **maintain the right to freedom of assembly and strengthen the right to freedom of expression, including by supporting journalists and human rights defenders**. The EU and MS cooperate closely with civil society and the media as well as the Journalist Safety Committee. The EU and MS have produced a local EU Strategy on Human Rights Defenders which outlines the actions envisaged to protect human rights defenders, including through political dialogue, awareness raising, trial monitoring, as well as internal and external relocation. The EU and MS have a close cooperation and bi-monthly meetings with Human Rights Defenders and have established a mechanism to ensure swift cooperation and burden sharing on the protection of Human Rights Defenders.

Planned Commitments For Afghanistan (2015)																															
Action Plan Area	EC (EU)	Austria	Belgium	Bulgaria	Croatia	Cyprus	Czech Rep.	Denmark	Estonia	Finland	France	Germany	Greece	Hungary	Ireland	Italy	Latvia	Lithuania	Luxembourg	Malta	Netherlands	Poland	Portugal	Romania	Slovakia	Slovenia	Spain	Sweden	UK	Total per Action Plan Area	
Promoting Peace, Security and Regional Stability																															
Peace and Reconciliation Process								402,107		1,650,000										4,99,899							50,000	3,013,530	1,592,790	13,779,949	25,448,366
Cooperation between Afghanistan and EU Neighbours	4,000,000									1,000,000		105,000						28,962													5,134,962
Reintegration of Afghan Refugees								6,450,245		1,500,000		12,900,000				775,923				92,000											21,658,088
Civilian Policing	91,000,000									8,300,000		80,000,000		44,571		48,000,000	130,000				15,675,203				40,050	576,857			100,660,000	361,397,044	
Reducing Organised Crime and Drug Production	2,000,000						226,701	16,075,662	315,000	750,000		140,000																	7,497,000	10,414,500	
Addressing Uncontrolled and Illegal Immigration								63c																							
TOTAL per EU Donor	97,000,000			27,500	447,000		226,701	27,998,034	315,000	13,200,000		93,146,000		44,571		48,775,823	130,000	28,962		20,987,203				40,050	576,857	50,000	3,013,530	1,592,790	121,936,949	424,046,959	
Reinforcing Democracy																															
Electoral Architecture and Procedures								1,942,475				2,000,000								1,480,000					71,200				2,473,473	7,967,148	
Parliamentary Elections																														14,000,000	
Accountability of the Executive	125,000,000							2,679,277				24,000,000																	371,649	152,069,926	
Sub-National Governance										1,000,000		47,990,000				2,700,000													1,076,190	13,704,754	66,469,944
TOTAL per EU Donor	125,000,000							4,621,752		1,000,000		73,980,000				2,700,000				1,480,000				71,200				3,927,312	27,704,754	240,479,918	
Encouraging Economic and Human Development																															
Human Development (Education, Health)	43,000,000							659,743	19,424,759	366,452		61,586,000				7,100,000	15,000									217,865	30,000		26,453,075	22,890,000	225,665,521
Public Financial Management								226,701	10,315,217																				12,502,418	23,044,334	
Financial Sustainability of the State (Revenue Generation)											11,450,000																			11,450,000	
Rural Economy								291,121	9,913,325	2,250,000	9,000,000	20,500,000				10,220,000				3,344,725								8,807,200	31,984,184	106,969,585	
Multiple Sectors (including ARTF, AITF)								447,673	500,000	5,000,000					6,792,000													26,519,200	164,090,000	205,338,873	
TOTAL per EU Donor	43,000,000							1,625,238	39,653,301	866,452	13,800,000	93,536,000				24,112,000	15,000			29,556,952				71,200			217,865	30,000	63,779,905	231,456,600	572,429,313
Fostering Rule of Law and Respect for Human Rights (in particular Rights of Women and Children)																															
Human Rights	800,000							1,607,566		900,000		634,000				1,385,000				3,072,000								3,029,869	1,099,623	12,528,058	
Justice System										1,000,000		5121,000									7,844,895							161,429	13,752,388	27,979,812	
End to Impunity																															
Freedom of assembly and expression										100,000		563,500																			663,500
TOTAL per EU Donor	800,000							1,607,566		2,000,000		6,338,500				1,385,000				11,016,895								3,197,298	14,852,011	41,191,370	
Total per EU Donor	626,900,000			68,500	687,000		61,951,939	69,790,653	61,181,452	40,000,000	626,000,000	626,000,500		644,571		67,672,233	414,500	28,962		61,424,049				611,250	674,722	60,000	61,893,530	672,484,895	639,550,314	61,278,146,660	

Note: Humanitarian Assistance not included in the EU Strategy indicative Data Matrix. EC: EUR 1,600,000; IT: EUR 1,000,000; LU: EUR 500,000; UK: EUR 27,193,997
 Finland's commitments include humanitarian aid, around 1% of the total assistance.

Planned Commitments For Afghanistan (2016)														Total per Action Plan Area																			
Action Plan Area	EC	Austria	Belgium	Bulgaria	Croatia	Cyprus	Czech Rep.	Denmark	Estonia	Finland	France	Germany	Greece	Hungary	Ireland	Italy	Latvia	Lithuania	Luxembourg	Malta	Netherlands	Poland	Portugal	Romania	Slovakia	Slovenia	Spain	Sweden	UK	Total per Action Plan Area			
Promoting Peace, Security and Regional Stability																																	
Peace and Reconciliation Process								535,655		1,600,000											4,654,999					50,000		1,592,780		8,615,634			
Cooperation between Afghanistans and its Neighbours																																	
Reintegration of Afghan Returnees								6,430,265		2,000,000											52,000										8,482,265		
Civilian Policing								4,688,735		8,600,000											15,000,000				421,337						29,657,072		
Reducing Organised Crime and Drug Production																																	
Addressing uncontrolled and illegal Immigration								ibc																									
TOTAL per EU Donor								11,654,655		12,100,000											19,888,999				421,337			1,592,780		46,152,971			
Reinforcing Democracy																																	
Electoral Architecture and Procedures	10,000,000							1,607,686																								11,607,686	
Parliamentary Elections								Under electoral Architecture and Procedures																								349,763	
Accountability of the Executive	70,000,000							2,009,458																								371,649	
Sub-National Governance	10,000,000																															4,304,780	
TOTAL per EU Donor	90,000,000							3,617,024																								98,643,216	
Encouraging Economic and Human Development																																	
Human Development (education, health)							433,042	15,070,834		7,500,000	11,000,000										22,436,614											22,842,775	
Public Financial Management								10,315,217																								10,315,217	
Financial Self-sustainability of the Afghan state (Revenue Generation)																																	
Rural Economy	80,000,000						291,121	14,070,000		2,500,000	9,000,000																					4,276,100	
Multiple sectors (including ARTF)										5,600,000																						28,519,200	
TOTAL per EU Donor	80,000,000						724,163	39,455,151		15,600,000	20,000,000										22,436,614											55,639,075	
Fostering Rule of Law Respect for Human Rights																																	
Human Rights	900,000							1,607,686		700,000											2,998,500											2,444,283	
Justice System	30,000,000									1,500,000											4,164,987											161,429	
End to Impunity																																	
Freedom of assembly and expression										100,000																						637,112	
TOTAL per EU Donor	30,900,000							1,607,686		2,300,000											7,163,487										3,212,824		
Total per EU Donor	€10,900,000						€74,163	€5,335,996		€9,900,000	€10,000,000										€19,467,000										€5,469,671		
EC																																	
TOTAL																																	€14,204,967

Finland's commitments include humanitarian aid, around 10 % of the total assistance.