



DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN

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Speech delivered by Ambassador Aurélia Bouchez, Head of the European Union Delegation to Kazakhstan, at the conference "Regional Security and the situation in Afghanistan"

Astana, 11 April 2013

Mr Chairman, Excellencies, Generals, ladies and gentlemen

Let me first thank you for this invitation

As an introduction, I would like to share with you a number of key facts and approaches pertaining to the EU engagement on Afghanistan.

First a few figures, which illustrate the priority attached to the situation in this country. The EU is one of the major donors providing development and humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. Between 2002 and 2012, the EU committed some 2.5 billions euros assistance to this country including 382 millions in humanitarian assistance.

For the period covering 2011-2013, around 200 millions euros are allocated every year by the EU for development programmes in Afghanistan. These focus on three key sectors: governance, including police- agriculture and rural development – and health and social protection. The EU is to continue and enhance its support in the new financial perspectives currently underway.

Now let me come to the EU approaches and policies. They can be summarized as follows: a long term and holistic approach ; and an active support to the regional dimension.

The EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting's conclusions, on 14 May 2012, underlined the correlation between security and long term development in Afghanistan and reiterated the long term commitment of the EU and its MS to support this country during transition and the decade of transformation. It also noted that this commitment requires reciprocal effort by the Afghan authorities to meet their own reform obligations.

The EU is supporting Afghanistan through a comprehensive approach that ensures synergies between political, security and development efforts in support of the transition process in the country. Afghanistan has a huge potential through economic development, the economy is growing, major investments are taking place. Transition gains are evident but they are fragile and reversible, if not based on pillars of governance and on the Afghani political actors' active commitment.

The EU is in the final stage of the negotiation of a ten-year Cooperation Agreement for Partnership and Development with Afghanistan. However it is clear that international commitments are linked to efforts by this country to fulfil commitments outlined notably at the Tokyo conference in 2011.

Let me also mention the EU contribution to the Afghans authorities' stronger lead on political and security issues, as 2014 approaches, through the EU assistance in providing Rule of Law training to the institutions, as well as supporting the evolution of the Afghan National Police into a professional civilian police force through EUPOL and financial support.

The regional dimension is key for a lasting successful transition. It goes both ways. Afghanistan needs regional cooperation and support to achieve lasting peace and development. And neighbours need to have a peaceful and economically thriving transition in the country. Insecurity emanating from Afghanistan can affect all regional players, including in the broader region, through terrorism, drugs trafficking or goods and people smuggling. Therefore Afghan security cannot be addressed without the engagement of the regional actors.

In this regard, may I commend the role of the Heart of Asia process, aimed at promoting stability, integrity and prosperity of Afghanistan and the region through a series of CBMs to promote trust and cooperation. This is the sole process led by Afghanistan and gathering all of its close neighbours. The EU looks forwards to taking part into the upcoming Ministerial meeting in Almaty, 25-26 April. Let me say here that we appreciate also the very positive bilateral contribution brought by Kazakhstan on a regular basis to the development of Afghanistan.

The EU contributes also actively to the regional cooperation through its EU-Central Asia Strategy, reviewed in 2012, which remains the point of reference of the EU relations with Central Asia. We welcome the interest of Central Asian countries to further deepen our partnership, in particular at a time when the region may face increasing challenges. Central Asia and the EU share a common aim to promote a secure Afghanistan and a prosperous region as a whole. In order to enhance our ability to jointly tackle these challenges, a regular High level EU-Central Asia Security Dialogue is to meet this year, as part of the regional political dialogue.

I would like to conclude by wishing full success to this important conference today which will certainly bring an important contribution to the Heart of Asia Ministerial meeting in Almaty.