EU Statement - United Nations Security Council: Building regional partnership in Afghanistan and Central Asia as a model to link security and development


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I have the honour to speak on behalf of the EU and its 28 Member States.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

I would like to thank the Kazakh Security Council presidency for convening this debate that provides a good opportunity to share views, best practices and experiences on the very topical subject as well as to take stock of initiatives both planned and ongoing that support international peace through regional cooperation.

Mr. President,

The EU and Central Asia have a common interest in Afghanistan’s security and prosperity. International and regional support to an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned inclusive peace process is essential. In this respect the Central Asian contribution, as direct neighbours, is crucial for the success of any meaningful peaceful settlement of the conflict in Afghanistan. Any stabilisation strategy requires, in our view, a solid regional approach.

The EU stands ready to support the Afghan stakeholders themselves in providing a conducive
environment for an intra-Afghan peace process. The EU supports the Afghan “Kabul Process on Peace and Security”, of which the next meeting is planned for 28 February. From that meeting, the EU would expect tangible progress on the way forward towards a peaceful settlement with the Taliban.

Reinforced regional cooperation is key to lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region. Such cooperation is indispensable for sustainable development. Afghanistan continues to engage with its neighbours through international fora such as the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, and the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan. The EU strongly supports such regional fora to facilitate economic and political cooperation among all regional stakeholders.

In this respect, we consider that the UN Centre for preventive diplomacy in Central Asia in Ashgabat has an important role to play in supporting countries in the region, including Afghanistan, in dealing with the common challenges related to security and development.

In this context connectivity, which is also part of the EU’s Global Strategy, is key to success. The EU supports efforts by Central Asian countries to facilitate trade and provide energy resources to Afghanistan. Afghanistan’s own Infrastructure and Connectivity Programme aims to develop transit and connectivity.

The “Lapiz Lazuli Corridor” railway between Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey (signed during the RECCA VII in November 2017), the Turkmenistan – Afghanistan – Pakistan – India (TAPI) pipeline, the CASA-1000 transmission line, the regional water management and cross border water management of the Kunar river Basin are all important connectivity projects for Afghanistan. They will have an important long-term positive impact and are also in the interest of the international community. Indeed, better connectivity for Afghanistan and its citizens could lead to improved economic development and infrastructure. This will eventually allow for a reduction of both international development aid to the country and the influx of migrants and refugees to the region and beyond. Politically, it could help to bring regional partners to engage positively in Afghanistan and to contribute to a more stable and peaceful Afghanistan.

Mr. President

The EU remains determined to counter all forms of terrorism (including the growing threat posed by ISIL affiliates) and violent extremism as fundamental threats to regional and international peace and stability. In this regard in 2017, as reflected in the Foreign Affairs Council conclusions on counter-terrorism of 19 June 2017 the EU also decided to provide more support to Central Asia in the area of counter-terrorism. A new regional project is being launched on conflict-sensitive reporting to support local media in positive action to support peace and security against radicalisation attempts and narratives. Similarly, there is a need to enhance data protection and internet governance. Terrorists use information and communication technologies to recruit, finance, intimidate and disseminate their message. For counter-terrorism policies, a crucial element is to find a sustainable balance between freedom and security in order to prevent the reemergence of ISIL affiliates. This is also important in Central Asia and Afghanistan. The EU is committed to achieving both. However, the debate on security versus freedom remains a work in progress.”

Threats of nexus between terrorism and organized crime, including drug trafficking also used for financing of terrorism affecting all countries of the region can only be confronted through increased political, economic and security cooperation. The EU is supporting the regional United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Programme in the region (covering Afghanistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). This is in line with EU Drugs Strategy 2013-2020 which stresses the importance of an improved capacity of EU Delegations to engage on drugs-related issues and networks at regional level. The EU also supports Central Asian
partners in the fight against drugs through a regional Central Asia Drug Action Programme (CADAP) and a trans-regional programme EU Action against Drugs and Organised Crime (EU-ACT).

Finally, Mr. President,

The EU has been supporting regional cooperation at the level of border guards in order to help Afghanistan to foster regional cooperation and facilitate secure trade links with its neighbours, especially Central Asia. In this context, the EU Border Management Northern Afghanistan (EU-BOMNAF) project assists the Afghan Border Police in better securing Afghanistan’s northern border in order to improve cross border cooperation, to reduce crime and to improve legal trade, travel and commerce along Afghanistan’s border with Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, complementing similar programmes in Central Asia (BOMCA).

Thank you very much.

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

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