



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Cooperation of Afghanistan H.E. Adela Raz

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 10, 2016

The United States warmly welcomes Deputy Foreign Minister Raz to the Permanent Council, and thanks her for addressing us on Afghanistan's development programs and regional cooperation efforts. Thank you also for sharing your personal story and the experience of many other Afghans you represent.

The United States was very pleased with the outcome of the recent Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, and welcomed the Afghan government's presentation of the country's new National Peace and Development Framework and its detailed national priority programs, including a new effort to economically empower Afghan women. The Brussels Conference was an important reaffirmation of the international commitment to Afghanistan's development. The United States thanks the EU for hosting the event, and all donors for their contributions to Afghanistan's future.

In Brussels, the United States pledged to seek assistance at or very near current levels for Afghanistan through 2020. The EU announced that donors collectively pledged to provide \$15.2 billion in development assistance to Afghanistan through 2020. In exchange for international pledges, the Afghan government, under the principle of mutual accountability, pledged to continue the aggressive pursuit of an ambitious reform agenda that will eventually lead the country to self-reliance. The Afghan government and international donors agreed in Brussels on 24 new reform targets focused on tackling corruption, improving governance, moving ahead on parliamentary elections, fiscal sustainability and empowering Afghan women.

Madam Minister, the OSCE has for many years played an important role in supporting Afghanistan, including through the Heart of Asia – Istanbul Process. Most recently, in September, the OSCE Center in Ashgabat assisted the government of Turkmenistan in organizing the fourth meeting of the regional technical working groups on confidence-building measures in the framework of the Istanbul Process on Afghanistan. This was part of a project to assist Turkmenistan in carrying out its role as co-chair of the regional technical groups within the Istanbul Process, a project that the United States supports and funds.

Through programs such as the Border Management Staff College and the Patrolling Programming and Leadership course, the OSCE is helping Afghanistan develop the professional law enforcement expertise it needs for a successful democratic security

transition. OSCE observation of the 2014 presidential elections contributed to a successful political transition in Afghanistan.

Madam Minister, in response to your call for the OSCE to provide greater support to Afghanistan through its economic and environmental dimension, we believe that the Organization's efforts to improve security and stability through closer economic ties and greater connectivity in Central Asia help accomplish this goal. The Cross Border Market Resource Centers on the Afghan-Tajik border demonstrates that the OSCE can promote regional trade by enhancing the institutional capacity and improving the governance norms that underpin international commerce. These and other activities that focus on assisting Afghanistan with its economic transition and improving economic connections with its neighbors will help the country become a center of regional trade. Through all of these efforts, and through such regional institutions as the OSCE Academy, the OSCE is strengthening the all-important people-to-people connections that serve as the foundation for regional ties between Afghanistan and its neighbors in Central Asia.

In this regard, we stress the crucial role that the OSCE Center in Bishkek and the OSCE Office in Tajikistan play in implementing these programs. All these projects and programs should be continued in order to promote security, stability, and prosperity in Afghanistan, Central Asia, and throughout the OSCE region.

Deputy Foreign Minister Raz, the United States looks forward to working with Afghanistan, its neighbors, and all participating States to enhance cooperation in Central Asia and throughout the OSCE region. Thank you, Madam Minister, for joining us today in the Permanent Council.

And before concluding, Mr. Chair, I'd like to respond to the comments made by our distinguished Russian colleague and say that, of course, the United States is in Afghanistan in support of the Afghan government and as part of NATO's mission. The United States takes very seriously civilian casualties. It is one of the few countries to distinguish itself in the way that it follows up and investigates civilian casualties. And we would encourage other participating States to do likewise.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.