

3. POL – Intervention at the International Conference on Afghanistan

Rede Kevin Rudd auf der internationalen Afghanistan-Konferenz in Bonn | 05.12.2011

Thank you very much Minister for your kind invitation to be here.

Firstly Australia is here to support this good initiative of the Government of Germany – Germany having provided so much global leadership on Afghanistan's future going back to the hallmark conference held ten years ago.

Secondly we are here to support our good friends from Afghanistan, because we recognise fully that the country's future lies in the hands of the people of Afghanistan.

And for the country to be properly supported, those who support it internationally must recognise that the leadership comes from your people, and from your government, and therefore we are here to provide practical means of support into the long-term future.

We also come as a country which has been very much to the fore in our practical assistance.

Australia has been over the last decade one of the top ten military contributors. We are the largest non-NATO contributor to Afghanistan. We are one of the top ten development partners in Afghanistan. And we see therefore our future as lying very much tied to the support that is necessary to ensure that the people of Afghanistan have a secure future through their own government.

So far we have invested some 11 billion dollars in support of Afghanistan and we'll continue to support Afghanistan in the future.

Prime Minister, I would just like to make three points.

One is that it is good that we are all here, because the key question ten years on is to send a very clear message to the broader international community, and to those within Afghanistan who would do Afghanistan ill, that we in the international community are here in total solidarity.

We have 86 governments, we have 48 foreign ministers. The fact that we are here supporting the conclusions - a document that we have before us today - sends a very clear message that this international community in solidarity with the people of Afghanistan are there not just for the next three years to 2014, but are here for the decade beyond 2014 as well in the critical task of nation building for the people of Afghanistan.

The second point that I'd like to make is that we are also strong supporters of the need to give practical effect to the conclusions document before us as well. It deals with security, it deals with a range of other areas, but we must make sure that the good intentions of the document are translated into reality.

It is fashionable in the international community to often talk about what is going wrong in Afghanistan. I support what my colleague, the Polish foreign minister said before, that it is critical to underpin that which is going right in Afghanistan.

Some people talk as if it is only a glass which is half empty. In fact some say that the glass has been broken all together. I disagree. I agree with my Polish colleague that this is a glass more than half

full. And we must have a consistent international story to tell, part of our on-going narrative in the international community that this represents formidable progress on what existed before, and we remain resolute to support it into the future.

Finally if I go to the conclusions document itself, a few quick points.

When we go to the conclusions document it goes to the questions of security. It goes to what we do with the peace process, regional cooperation, economic and social development and governance.

On security a core question we face is this – that is, what the Afghan government is saying to us about the support it needs for the ANSF beyond 2014.

We in the international community of course look forward to the Chicago Conference next May. But unless we get this right, together, and have an Afghan National Security Force of sufficient size, equipment and training to deal with the long-term security challenges of Afghanistan, we will see undone so much of the good work that has been done so far.

The second point goes to regional cooperation, and here I commend so much the work of our colleagues in Turkey. The Istanbul Conference of earlier this month was a great success. It brought together the countries of the wider region in charting out how we deal cooperatively with Afghanistan's economic future and its wider security future as well. We in Australia stand ready to support that into the future.

I agree with the comments which have already been made that it is regrettable that Pakistan is not here with us. They should be. We need to craft, together, internationally in partnership with our friends from across the region to ensure that there is appropriate regional engagement in supporting Afghanistan into the future.

And finally, if I could say this, on Afghanistan's future economic and social development path, we intend to be a long-term partner.

We are one of Afghanistan's top ten development partners now, but beyond that we recognise also the critical importance of developing Afghanistan's private economy. Whether it is in mining, whether it is in agriculture, whether it is in the resources and energy sector, we will do so through our development program, mining for development, sustainable agriculture in arid areas and in dry land farming, but also to ensure that we are putting the Afghan economy on a sustainable basis for the future. Because it is only that, not purely through development assistance, that will underpin Afghanistan's needs.

To conclude, we of Australia are long-term reliable partners. We intend to be with you beyond 2014 and for the decade following as well. I thank you.