

AFGHANISTAN

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

I wish to thank our hosts for their hospitality and the excellent organization of the Conference. I align myself completely with the speech delivered by the High Representative of the European Union Mrs. Ashton.

For Greece an inclusive Afghan-led process of reconciliation, endorsed and assisted by Kabul's neighbors and the region is a prerequisite for the stability of the country. We must be clear about the necessary outcome of any negotiation: insurgents must renounce violence and comply with the laws and constitution of Afghanistan, including its protection of women and minorities. Such a process would have to be accepted by all of Afghanistan's major ethnic groups and political blocs. For this to work, everyone has to feel they have responsibility for and a stake in its successful outcome. At the same time, it is imperative that the Afghan Government establishes a framework for civil society, based on democratic principles, justice and the rule of law.

We take the view that our diplomatic and political efforts will only succeed if they are paired with a strategy to increase economic opportunities. Lasting stability and security go hand in hand with greater economic development. The run-up to 2014 is a window of opportunity for the Afghan government, with the assistance of the international community, to lay the foundation for sustainable economic growth. It is crucial to our broader effort that assistance for the civilian population continues in Afghanistan. A robust effort by the international community will help the Afghan government build credibility with its own people, offer alternatives to the insurgency and provide incentives for all Afghans to renounce violence and work together toward a better future.

Furthermore, Greece supports the launch of negotiations for an EU-Afghanistan Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development. In this framework, Greece stresses the need to put the emphasis on specific sectors, such as health and education, which will benefit the more vulnerable groups of the population. We attach particular importance to the enhancement of the cooperation on migration issues, especially on combating and preventing illegal migration.

We emphasize the EU's commitment to support Afghan efforts in strengthening policing and the rule of law beyond 2014, through the EUPOL Afghanistan operation.

As regards development policy, Afghanistan has been a priority for the Greek Government since 2002. We have contributed more than 80

million Euros and we are currently focusing on the fulfilment of the existing pledges and the completion of the ongoing projects, promoting good governance and democratic institutions in partnership with other donors.

In concluding, Mr. Chairman, I am confident that today's important Conference will prove to be a landmark for the progress and prosperity of Afghanistan and the wider region.