

December 5, 2011

Bonn II Conference on Afghanistan

Remarks by Ambassador Thordur Aegir Oskarsson
On behalf of Iceland

Mr. Chairman,

I welcome the important initiative by the German authorities resulting in the Bonn II Conference, which provides an important venue to assess developments in Afghanistan since the Bonn Agreement in 2001 and look into long term engagement of the international community beyond 2014.

Let me express sincere hope that the Afghan Chairmanship will bring this gathering to a successful conclusion for the benefit of the Afghan people and a prosperous, democratic and peaceful Afghanistan.

Stabilizing and rebuilding Afghanistan is both complex and complicated, and there are no quick fixes. Both Afghan authorities and the international community must meet their respective obligations and deliver on made commitments.

We, the international community, cannot afford to fail Afghanistan and its people.

The security situation remains a major challenge, and one cannot but help feel concerned about the capacity of the Afghan government to handle and sustain security responsibilities effectively. This is particularly pertinent after 2014 when the ISAF forces have left the country, which is highly likely to be still facing some form of insurgency.

This highlights the paramount importance of paying equal attention to the three pillars of the transition process; security, governance and development. The importance of a comprehensive approach to the success of the transition process cannot be overstated. Peace and security in Afghanistan cannot be sustained without improvement in good governance and development.

At this stage there is critical need for a more robust international leadership regarding the present and long term commitments of the international community to peaceful and democratic Afghanistan.

It is no less critical that Afghan authorities do their part, and ensure that Afghan institutions serve their people, in particular as regards improving the delivery of basic services, protecting human rights and fighting corruption.

Afghanistan has made significant progress in important areas of development, but enormous challenges still remain. These must be tackled through an effective and sustainable long term development strategy which goes hand in hand with greatly improved governance and security.

The international community must focus on supporting democratization, rule of law and governance reform; the establishment of an inclusive and transparent political processes; the defence of human rights and basic freedoms; alongside the efforts to strengthen the Afghan economy.

The need to make progress in reconciliation and reintegration cannot be allowed to marginalize human rights nor rule of law. Peace cannot be had at any price.

Iceland underlines that every conclusion on future political commitments must be conditioned on respect for human rights within Afghanistan, in particular those of women.

The situation of women and girls of Afghanistan is of particular concern. Their powerlessness is striking in spite of various efforts and actions designed to improve their access to power and participation in decision-making at all levels. As recognised in United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and subsequent resolutions, women have a vital role to play in building and preserving peace. Women must be an integral part and meaningfully represented in the reconciliation efforts and the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Women's organisations continue to play a vital role in this respect.

As in every country the future of Afghanistan lies with its children. With infant and maternal mortality rates among the highest in the world there is not much future. Basic health care and education are powerful tools to change this. Providing protection and opportunities for Afghanistan's youth will contribute to a more peaceful and prosperous society.

Mr. Chairman,

Deeds, not words, are going to provide for Afghanistan's future and its citizen's well-being. Afghanistan's neighbours play an important role in this respect. Initiatives such as the Istanbul process and the New Silk Road will only succeed if the political will of those with direct interests materializes in concrete actions.

A clear commitment to a constructive, long-term international engagement in Afghanistan is needed well beyond 2014. This commitment must be unequivocal. Here, the Afghan authorities must equally deliver on their commitments. The way forward is a two way street.

The outcome of this important conference as embodied in the concluding document gives a clear road map to our common goal.

With strong political will and collective efforts all present here today can contribute to a stable Afghanistan where the Afghan people enjoy peace, safety and future with opportunities.

Iceland is committed to contribute to that effort.