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International Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan

BONN

5 December 2011

Ministerial intervention

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,

I want first to join with other participants in extending my warmest thanks to our hosts, Germany.

Let me begin by aligning Ireland with the remarks made by High Representative Ashton on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

This should be a time of hope for the people of Afghanistan.

Ireland strongly supports the efforts which the international community is making to assist Afghanistan in its transition to a happier and more stable future based on peace, democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Ireland provides a small contingent of military personnel to ISAF. We also provided a number of police officers to EUPOL to support the vital work being done by EUPOL in the area of training and capacity-building. In addition, since 2005, Ireland has provided a total of nearly €28 million in humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan.

While the international community has to operate in an extremely difficult security environment, and the military challenges remain formidable, it is at the same time clear that the problems we are confronting in Afghanistan cannot be solved by military action on its own. The Afghanistan which we all wish to build for the future will come about only through political action, through a process of political reconciliation and reconstruction. We must help the Afghan people to create a new political order founded on peace, on democracy, on human rights and on the rule of law. We can make a profound difference by strengthening Afghan capacities and giving them concrete support in all these areas.

Ireland is very sensitive to Afghan concerns and fears of being abandoned in the post-2014 period. We believe, however, that this Conference offers us all an opportunity to allay these fears by providing firm guarantees for the future.

The agenda for this Conference, with its focus on the civilian aspects of Afghanistan's development, allows us to discuss key political issues in Afghanistan and issues of fundamental human rights, including women's rights.

As the process of political dialogue is taken forward and efforts are made to reconcile and reintegrate all elements of Afghan society, it will be important to ensure that the gains made in recent years in respect of human rights, and especially women's rights, are not compromised.

Ireland remains deeply concerned about the vulnerability of women in Afghan society.

The recently published UNAMA/OHCHR report "A long way to go: Implementation of the *Elimination of Violence against Women Law* in Afghanistan" acknowledges the very big first step forward in support of

women's equality and the protection of human rights which was taken by the Government of Afghanistan when it enacted this landmark legislation in 2009.

However, the report notes, disappointingly, that the implementation of this law is limited; and that much greater efforts are needed to improve enforcement. This points among other things to a need for effective capacity-building in areas like the rule of law. The international community needs to continue to engage with Afghanistan on this.

Ireland believes that the United Nations should have a central role to play in the post-2014 context, including through a reinforced and more effective UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

The message from this Conference must be that the Government in Kabul, working together with the international community, can achieve a peaceful, democratic and stable society in Afghanistan post – 2014.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.