

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesperson**

**For Immediate Release
2011/T57-10**

December 6, 2011

Remarks

**Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton
At Afghanistan Conference First Working Session**

**December 5, 2011
Bonn Conference Center
Bonn, Germany**

SECRETARY CLINTON: We've had an excellent series of presentations already this morning, so I will not, in the interests of time, go over the points that were made by Your Excellency. But I think it is important to recognize the critical nature of the next two periods: first between now and the end of 2014, the transition; and then the decade of transformation that follows.

As the World Bank has recently projected, Afghanistan will face continuing budget deficits and economic hardships that will require new sources of growth and revenue to overcome. And yet, at the same time, many countries represented here in this hall understand that the international community also faces fiscal constraints.

So it is essential that we put together a comprehensive and effective strategy that maximizes the resources and their use. And that is why we are here in Bonn, because each of us has responsibilities we must meet if we are going to be successful.

I very much appreciate the call by the Afghan Government for mutual accountability between Afghanistan and the international community. We very much agree, President Karzai, those must be our watchwords. And the United States is prepared to stand with the Afghan people for the long haul to support this transition to sustainable stability and growth, and we recognize that the Afghans themselves, as the president has said, have commitments that they must meet, taking difficult decisions to embrace reform, lead in their own defense, and strengthen an inclusive democracy rooted in the rule of law. So mutual accountability will be at the heart of the commitments that we make to one another.

First, on security, that transition is already underway, and Afghan forces will soon be responsible for protecting fully half the population. For our part, as coalition combat forces draw down, the United States and our international partners must remain committed to training, advising, and assisting Afghan forces, even as together we continue to go after those who are unwilling to end the conflict or who are engaging in acts of terrorism. So let there be no doubt that the transition signals the beginning of a new phase of international support.

Second, with respect to the economy, the reforms that the president has outlined are heartening, as was the IMF's approval of a new three-year program for Afghanistan in November.

Third, on the political track, we commend President Karzai for his commitment to proceed with inclusive and fair presidential elections in 2014. And I think the international community must continue to provide robust support to strengthen democratic institutions, including a free press and a strong electoral process.

The United States is pleased to announce we will be joining other partners in resuming financial disbursements to the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund so that those resources can be put to work.

And finally, this process that we are engaged in, which builds on 10 years of efforts, requires not only all in the region, all of the neighbors, but the rest of the international community that has been committed. The entire region has a stake in Afghanistan's future and much to lose if the country again becomes a source of terrorism and instability. And that is why we would, of course, have benefited from Pakistan's contribution to this conference. And to that end, nobody in this hall is more concerned than the United States is about getting an accurate picture of what occurred in the recent border incident.

And it's imperative that we all support an Afghan-led reconciliation process. It was encouraging that after the assassination of President Rabbani, the Loya Jirga in Kabul reaffirmed Afghanistan's commitment to this.

So the agenda is ambitious but essential, but we are clearly committed. The United States intends to stay the course with our friends in Afghanistan. We will be there with you as you make the hard decisions that are necessary for your future.

And so, Mr. President, thank you for convening this conference. It gives us all a chance to take stock of where we are and determine how we can best go forward in order to support the peace, prosperity, and democracy of a secure and stable Afghanistan. Thank you very much. (Applause.)