

Foreign Secretary's Intervention at the Bonn Conference

I am grateful to Chancellor Merkel and President Karzai for convening this historic conference. It gives us all the opportunity to review our commitment to a stable and peaceful future for Afghanistan.

We should always remember the many sacrifices of the Afghan people during this period. I also pay tribute to the countries and organisations represented here and to NATO for its role in Afghanistan. Our steadfast commitment to Afghanistan's security and development has enabled many of the country's substantial gains in the ten years since the Petersberg Conference. Today, in partnership with the government of Afghanistan, we must secure and consolidate these gains.

This conference is agreeing a blueprint for the international community's long-term commitment to Afghanistan. It is sending a clear message that Afghanistan's friends will continue to support her long into the future. It is reiterating the Afghan Government's commitment to providing the governance, economic development and political progress its people need and deserve. And it is reinforcing the importance of regional engagement alongside wider international support for Afghanistan, building on the successful Istanbul Conference in November.

Britain will play its part over the coming years. The end of a combat role for British forces in Afghanistan by 2015 will not mark the end of our support to

Afghanistan or to the Afghan National Security Forces, or the importance we attach to wider security in the region. But we need to be frank. Afghanistan will not be perfect in 2014. It will still be one of the poorest countries in the world. It will still face many security challenges. We are here to help it create a sustainable future.

The Afghan Government has set out its clear determination to take responsibility for Afghanistan's security and to develop its security forces. We will support this objective through funding and continued training, in particular through a new officer training academy. It is essential that in Chicago next year the international community finalises the details of its long term financial support for Afghan security forces, and Britain will work towards that goal.

We recognise that the international community's financial support is urgently needed so that Afghanistan can develop its own long-term prosperity. The British Government is committed to a long-term development partnership with Afghanistan. We look forward to continuing the discussions on fiscal sustainability, which have taken place today, in the run-up to the conference in Tokyo next year.

President Karzai has also set out a vision for Afghanistan, building on the wide support from the Loya Jirga last month. The principle of inclusiveness is vital, so that all Afghanistan's people have a stake in the country's future. I commend the Afghan Government for its leadership and energy in pursuing a peace process. President Karzai's three end state conditions will continue to act as guiding principles for our support of that process.

We welcome President Karzai's commitment that all those who wish to reconcile should respect the Afghan Constitution, including its guarantee for equal rights of men and women. We strongly support the Afghan Government as it works to uphold the rights of all its citizens.

This conference is providing a framework for future partnership between the Afghan Government and the international community beyond 2014. I am confident that the commitments we are agreeing today will enable us to protect and build on Afghanistan's hard-won gains over the last decade, so that it can continue to tread the path towards a stable and prosperous future.