

Statement
by H.E. Doru Costea, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania,
to the International Afghanistan Conference: “From Transition to Transformation”
(Bonn, 5 December 2011)

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to begin these remarks by thanking the Government of Afghanistan for the invitation to this important international Conference. Also, I would like to praise Germany for their long-term support and leadership in matters related to the security, stability and reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Ten years ago, here in Bonn, the international community assumed the responsibility to disrupt Al Qaeda, to combat terrorism, to secure Afghanistan and to maintain the international peace and security.

From the very beginning Romania has actively supported the military campaign and our contribution with combat troops has increased over the years, reaching today a total of 1880. We took again this year, for the second time, the responsibility of operating the Kabul International Airport. Unfortunately, throughout our presence on the ground Romanian soldiers paid with their lives. As we pay tribute to victims and their families, we must make sure that the sacrifice of all those who died, be they Afghan civilians and military, or representatives of the international community was not in vain.

In Bonn again, we gather to discuss the prospects of the international engagement in Afghanistan. After ten years, our focus is shifting from security and stabilization towards political and economic cooperation. This is a new perspective that could only be envisaged due to the substantial improvements over the past decade.

I welcome the announcement made few days ago by president Karzai on the endorsement of areas for the second phase of Transition. With this, the Afghan Forces will assume responsibility for the security of almost half of the country, thus demonstrating a continued progress in their development.

This achievement was facilitated by the training efforts pursued with the support of the international community. Romania has contributed to this and we are satisfied with the results so far. Just this year, Romania deployed 59 army instructors and 66 gendarmes, who trained more than 4.000 Afghan officers and non commissioned officers.

We are confident that progress comes from accomplishing many small things, and therefore pledge our continuous support for the training and mentoring of the ANSF, being confident that all these efforts will play a key role in its development. For the next year, we intend to double number of police officers assigned to EUPOL Afghanistan.

As part of a broader policy towards strengthening the Afghan institutions, Romania is keen to support the Afghan civilian police and the reform of the judiciary, through constant participation within the EUPOL mission in Afghanistan.

The comprehensive approach of the transition process must be based on increased coordination between the civilian and military dimensions of our contributions to stabilizing Afghanistan.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Romania is looking forward to see that quality of life is rising in Afghanistan and that social services are delivered to the population without any gender or ethnic discrimination.

The democratic structures of Afghanistan should work in a sustainable way and enjoy the full backing of the Afghan people. Afghanistan needs to show strong leadership in terms of promoting key reforms, particularly in the fields of governance, respect for human rights, the rule of law and the accountability in managing public funds.

Romania is convinced that long-term stabilization and security can only be achieved through negotiations aimed at political reconciliation. We hope that the peace process will continue with the support of all Afghan society's segments. In this regard, efforts to find a political solution must be enhanced.

To that end it is necessary to work hard, on a daily basis. We encourage the efforts to engage with those Afghans who abandon violence, break ties with terrorist organizations and accept the Afghan constitution. For security gains to be sustainable, it is necessary to further improve the governance throughout country. Transition process should enable effective civilian authority, with institutions responding to needs of Afghan citizens.

At the same time, Romania is confident that the reconciliation process cannot succeed without a long term international commitment to peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today we have discussed about deepening and broadening the Partnership between Afghanistan and the International Community. And partnership means cooperation, both multilateral and bilateral.

Within the EU, we agreed to start negotiations for a Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development with Afghanistan, in order to create a coherent and legally binding framework, setting out common values as well as mutual rights and obligations.

We are confident that beyond 2014 the NATO-Afghanistan Enduring Partnership will constitute the main framework necessary to build the long-term engagement of the Alliance with Afghanistan.

Romania opened last August a diplomatic mission in Kabul with a view to developing the bilateral relations with Afghanistan and to renew our commitment to the stability of the Afghan society, and we are considering appointment of a special representative for Afghanistan.

We are ready to cooperate with Afghanistan on bilateral basis, looking forward to closer ties in the fields of economic, society, science, culture, education, health and environment.

In recent years, Romania has been steadily involved in the international development assistance efforts in Afghanistan. Since 2006 we put a special emphasis to all the activities projected for this country, and we pledge to remain closely connected to the UNHCR, the International Red Cross Committee and the World Food Program respective endeavours. We are aware that these efforts enable sustainable development, and help the people of Afghanistan who have long suffered from the conflict.

In the end, let me stress that Romania is determined to remain alongside our Afghan friends through and beyond transition.