



Die
Bundesregierung

Federal Government Report on the Status of and Outlook for Germany's Afghanistan Engagement

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▪ **Key points**

- Engagement in Afghanistan since 2001 – **the most extensive civil-military mission in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany**: Germany is the second-largest bilateral donor (currently providing up to 250 million euros per year for development and 180 million euros for civil stabilisation) and the fourth-largest troop-contributing nation to NATO's Resolute Support Mission (currently providing up to 980 soldiers and up to 80 million euros per year to Afghan army trust funds).
- **2014/2015 marked a turning point**: end of the ISAF combat mission and withdrawal of most international troops; handover of security responsibility; democratic, but difficult, handover of power to the National Unity Government under Ghani/Abdullah.
- The situation is characterised by **great challenges**: inadequate effectiveness of the state administration and security forces; increased attacks by the Taliban and IS groups; corruption, poverty and unemployment; (forced) migration; parliamentary and presidential elections in 2018/19.
- However, engagement has also brought about **tangible achievements**: the international terrorist threat from Afghanistan has been contained; education, health and life expectancy have improved significantly; notable progress has been made in areas such as women's rights and free media; and transport and energy infrastructure have been improved.
- Achievements are **insufficient and fragile**; international support, including military training and guidance, is still needed alongside Afghanistan taking on greater responsibility for itself in order to prevent setbacks in the future. The process is taking longer than expected in 2001.
- The **aims** remain to reduce the level of violence, minimise the terrorist threat, establish a legitimate and stable state, achieve lasting economic and social development, and reach a political solution to the conflict. Engagement thus also serves to attenuate the causes of (forced) migration.
- Germany is pursuing a comprehensive **coordinated approach** with diplomatic endeavours and stabilisation projects in the Stability Pact for Afghanistan, military participation in NATO's Resolute Support training and guidance mission, development cooperation, endeavours to rebuilding the police force and humanitarian aid.
- **Support is contingent on reforms**: support is linked to reforms by the Afghan Government, including inclusive government, fighting corruption, better economic conditions and cooperation on (forced) migration issues. Funding is withheld if cooperation is not provided.
- German engagement is only provided **in cooperation and coordination with international partners**, that is, the EU, NATO, the UN and the International Contact Group on Afghanistan, which is coordinated by Germany. Germany is committed to its undertakings and responsibility.
- The strategic framework for a political settlement is an **Afghan-owned peace process** between the Government and Taliban, with international and regional support. This process should involve the Taliban at political level and safeguard earlier achievements, particularly as regards human rights.

I. Introduction

1. The great political importance and complexity of the Federal Government's engagement in Afghanistan mean that these endeavours are constantly coordinated and evaluated by the ministries and discussed between Afghan and international partners, as well as with the German Bundestag, stakeholders from civil society and the public. The Bundestag is informed regularly about the situation in Afghanistan, for example in weekly reports by parliament, plenary debates, parliamentary committees and answers to questions in the Bundestag.
2. The Federal Government adopted concepts for its Afghanistan policy on 2 September 2003, 13 September 2006, 5 September 2007, 9 September 2008 and 18 November 2009. From 2010 to 2014, it published annual progress reports (6 December 2010, 14 December 2011, 28 November 2012, 5 February 2014 and 19 November 2014). The Progress Report of 19 November 2014 was drawn up when the Afghan security forces took on security responsibility nationwide, the NATO mission ISAF ended and most international troops left Afghanistan. It was thus written in the form of an interim report on Germany's Afghanistan engagement. The first democratic handover of power in Afghanistan, which took place at the same time, also marked a shift to Afghanistan taking on greater responsibility for itself.
3. Progress on stabilisation, reconstruction and development in the country is now primarily attributable to Afghanistan and its Government, and can only be seen as an indirect result of international or German support. The Afghan Government publishes its own progress reports at regular intervals. The post-2001 period cannot be seen as a time of constant progress. Instead, it has included setbacks, as well as stagnation in some areas, in which international support sometimes prevented the situation from deteriorating further.
4. This report will thus not add a new description of the achievements to previous reports, but instead provide a brief and realistic inventory and highlight prospects for the future nature of Germany's Afghanistan engagement in the international framework that can serve as a basis for further policy decisions. As a strategic document, its aim is not to provide additional reporting on the situation to the interior ministries and the courts. Such reporting will continue to be provided in the designated ways.

II. General aspects

5. Seventeen years after the end of the Taliban regime and the signing of the Bonn Agreement, and despite many achievements, Afghanistan is still characterised by a difficult security situation, albeit one that varies from region to region, a government

that does not have the ability to act in all parts of the country, widespread poverty among the population and a regional environment defined by competing interests. This poses special challenges to and legitimacy requirements for the Federal Government's political engagement, which is underpinned by significant civil, police and military funding and coordinated with international partners. From a strategic viewpoint, these different components must constantly be assessed and adapted as regards their effectiveness.

6. The simultaneous takeover of security responsibility and the first democratic handover of power in the autumn and winter of 2014/15 were a watershed for Afghanistan. The end of the NATO combat mission ISAF and the withdrawal of over 100,000 soldiers – 90 percent of the international armed forces deployed to the country – were a shock for the Afghan economy due to the loss of revenue associated with these deployments. This shock had a negative impact on growth and public-sector budgets and increased people's motivation to leave the country. As a result of lower military pressure, the Taliban were able to significantly expand their sphere of influence in rural areas, particularly from the air. The National Unity Government, which was only formed following mediation by the international community after the presidential election of 2014, lost valuable time for drawing up and carrying out overdue reforms due to ongoing friction in its ranks.
7. Contrary to what some people feared, however, this watershed did not unleash a downward spiral leading to a collapse of state institutions. Instead, Afghanistan has withstood the test so far, in part thanks to international support. The National Unity Government under presidential candidates Ghani and Abdullah has lasted and is getting necessary reforms off the ground. With international support, the security forces have been able to repel all major attacks on provincial centres, albeit with a large number of casualties. The Taliban have lost many commanders and still do not enjoy support among most of the population. Economic growth is slowly increasing once again.
8. The joint engagement by the Afghan Government and the international community has led to important and tangible achievements in the past 17 years. Afghanistan is no longer the central training camp for Islamist terrorists from all over the world. Women's position in society has improved significantly; there is a wide range of media, and political debates take place freely. Vital transport and supply infrastructure has been rebuilt; educational opportunities have been improved by new schools and universities and teacher training; schooling, healthcare and life expectancy are at a higher level than ever before in the history of the country. Germany's engagement has played a key role in these achievements. However, further endeavours are required in all of these fields. To this day, Afghanistan has not been able to make up for the shortcomings in social and economic development resulting from decades of armed conflicts, while corruption and violations of human rights remain widespread. Recent years in particular have shown how fragile earlier achievements remain.

9. Furthermore, regional conditions have changed in the past years. The campaign conducted by so-called Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria has inspired militant groups in Afghanistan to pursue a similar course and carry out a series of brutal attacks in the country in the name of IS. This development has given rise to a perception of threat and to counter-measures in neighbouring countries. As a result, the Taliban has been strengthened as a putative opponent to IS. It is also apparent that Russia's Afghanistan policy is increasingly opposed to the Afghan Government and NATO. On the other hand, growing interest on the part of neighbouring countries such as China or the Central Asian republics in stability in Afghanistan provides new opportunities. In addition, the US South Asia strategy announced in August 2017, which ties engagement in Afghanistan to conditions to be achieved rather than deadlines to be met and is embedded in a regional approach, has created new momentum both for military operations and relations with Pakistan, the results of which cannot yet be entirely foreseen.
10. It remains a key German interest that Afghanistan be sufficiently stable and not pose a threat to Germany, its allies and the region. Germany is committed to the responsibility it took on for the people in Afghanistan, its undertakings to international partners and solidarity among NATO allies. Germany is the second-largest bilateral donor and currently the fourth-largest troop-contributing nation to NATO's Resolute Support Mission. The Federal Government has pledged to continue its civil support for Afghanistan and financial support for the security sector at the same or virtually same level until 2020, provided that conditions on the Afghan side permit this and the funding is approved by legislators.
11. The international community reiterated its ongoing civil support for stabilisation, reconstruction and development in Afghanistan at the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan in October 2016. The Federal Government has expressed its commitment to long-term civil engagement in Afghanistan and earmarked a contribution of up to 1.7 billion euros for the period until 2020. It can thus allocate up to 250 million euros per year for development cooperation and 180 million euros per year for civil stabilisation projects in the Stability Pact for Afghanistan.
12. The past 17 years of experience with international Afghanistan engagement have proved – at times painfully – to what extent success depends on setting goals realistically on the basis of an objective analysis of the situation, our interests and influence and drawing up a flexible schedule based on the findings of this analysis. Establishing operational security forces, strengthening rule-of-law institutions and overcoming the social impact of a conflict that has lasted decades are tasks for entire generations and require strategic patience. The experience of recent years has shown that a strategy based on rigid deadlines can be counter-productive if it reduces pressure on the parties to the conflict to reach agreement.

13. Joint engagement should help achieve the following aims:

- Reduce the violent conflict to a level that can be controlled by the Afghan security forces and minimises the threat to Germany, its allies and the region
- Create a state that enjoys legitimacy and thus facilitates stability, in part through its effective safeguarding of security and justice, and particularly of human rights
- Ensure economic and social development that gives people prospects for the future beyond poverty, (forced) migration and extremism
- Foster an Afghan-owned peace process that is supported by other countries in the region.

14. In this context, the Federal Government is pursuing a comprehensive approach comprised of coordinated elements:

- Political dialogue and diplomatic endeavours help to foster the rule of law, the fight against corruption, human rights, democracy, economic and social development, and an Afghan-owned peace process.
- In concrete terms, stabilisation measures help to create a safe environment, improve living conditions in the near future and provide alternatives to war and violence economies. The Federal Government is supporting endeavours to build up the police force through several programmes. For example, the bilateral German Police Project Team provides training and leadership training to Afghan police officers.
- Development cooperation is improving the Afghan population's living conditions and creating lasting prospects beyond poverty, violence and forced migration.
- On the military side, the Bundeswehr is involved in training, advising and supporting Afghan defence and security forces as part of NATO's Resolute Support Mission, with the aim of enabling these forces to take on their long-term security responsibility.
- Humanitarian aid provides support to particularly vulnerable parts of the population in line with need and on the basis of humanitarian principles.

15. In return, Germany expects its Afghan partners to take on responsibility, too. The Federal Government is therefore increasingly linking its support to reforms that Afghanistan undertook to carry out in an agreement with the donor community, which was renewed in 2016. To this end, the Federal Government is providing incentives and setting conditions, thus making support contingent on reforms. Some German development policy commitments are currently tied to implementation of the reform agenda agreed with the Afghan Government in 2016 (Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework — SMAF). The prerequisite for payment of funds from the Stability Pact for Afghanistan also includes the National Unity Government being operational and cooperation on (forced) migration issues. In 2017, the Federal Government was of the opinion that these criteria had been met. It will continue to

develop these instruments and to work towards close coordination with international partners.

16. Joint endeavours by the Afghan Government and the most important international stakeholders are the only way to bring about lasting stability and development in Afghanistan. It is thus important to the Federal Government to coordinate its own activities and those of its partners. As coordinator of the International Contact Group (ICG) on Afghanistan comprised of over 50 countries and international organisations, Germany plays an active role in coordinating policy. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) coordinates cooperation among the donors and supports the peace and reconciliation process, elections, regional cooperation, and the protection and promotion of human rights. In addition to providing political and financial support, the Federal Government, as coordinator of the annual resolution on Afghanistan at the UN General Assembly, is working to strengthen the United Nations' role. In the military context, NATO provides substantial military and political coordination support. Its Resolute Support Mission brings together soldiers and abilities from around 50 allies and partner nations. As a framework nation, Germany coordinates some 20 troop-contributing allies and partners in northern Afghanistan. As part of its common foreign and security policy, the European Union is active as a political and development partner to Afghanistan, particularly in the fields of the rule of law, building democracy, rural development, and access to healthcare and basic services. The Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, of the other part, also helps to achieve these goals. The Federal Government plays its part in implementing the EU's Afghanistan strategy and drawing up joint positions.
17. In view of the tensions between the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan and Pakistan and of Pakistan and India, as well as competing interests of other regional stakeholders such as China, Iran and Russia, the Federal Government is working to foster regional cooperation, both through intensive diplomacy and concrete projects, as well as support for gradually emerging regional formats such as the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process and the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA).
18. Against this backdrop, the Federal Government is adhering to its approach of multilateral, sustainable and comprehensive civil, police and military engagement aimed at fostering peace, development and stability in Afghanistan. Given the fragile political and security situation at both national and regional level, this approach does not guarantee success that can be defined in terms of quality or time, but does, however, offer a realistic chance of lasting progress. Conceivable alternatives would involve significantly higher risks. Terminating the international community's military or civil engagement prematurely could cause a chain reaction with unpredictable consequences for stability in Afghanistan and the region. A unilateral withdrawal by Germany would have a significant impact in northern Afghanistan and on Germany's credibility as a

partner in NATO and the EU. Particularly in Afghanistan, many European partners take their lead from German policies. Limiting endeavours to civil measures only would pose an unacceptable level of risk to the international and German experts needed for such measures, who would be left without military back-up. Conversely, taking a purely military approach and reverting to a combat mission would block the prospect of a political settlement to the conflict and sustainable development for years.

19. On the contrary, efforts to foster an Afghan-owned peace process must be stepped up. Germany and the EU, provided the Afghan parties so wish and the necessary resources are made available, can play an important role in this process. The key aim of German and European Afghanistan policy is that the Afghan parties to the conflict launch and successfully carry out a peace and reconciliation process with regional and international support. The peace treaty agreed in 2016 with Hezb-e Islami under its leader Hekmatyar shows that rapprochement can be successful. The end of rigid deadlines for the further reduction of international troop deployments has increased the pressure on the rebels to also strive for this type of political settlement.
20. Despite justified concerns, there are grounds for optimism that the joint endeavours by the Afghan Government and the international community can achieve the goals that have been set. A new, well-educated generation, including many women, is moving into decision-making positions. The Afghan security forces are increasingly taking the offensive in operations and the Afghanistan Air Force is being rebuilt. The National Unity Government is pursuing an ambitious programme of reforms. Unlike many crisis-hit countries, Afghanistan can count on a high level of patriotism and over 250 years of nationhood, support for the armed forces among the population and international solidarity. Regional transport and energy infrastructure projects are also making headway. Afghanistan has important raw material resources and potential to generate renewable energies.
21. However, the attacks on the German Consulate General in Mazar-e-Sharif on 10 November 2016 and on the German Embassy in Kabul on 31 May 2017, which greatly reduced the missions' ability to function, coupled with threats of abduction and attack against experts involved in international cooperation, showed once again that Germany and its allies must remain prepared for external shocks and alternative scenarios as part of their engagement. The latest impact of severe attacks in Kabul, such as the attack on the Intercontinental Hotel on 20 January 2018 and the attack close to the former Ministry of the Interior on 27 January 2018, illustrated this clearly once again. Rapidly restoring the German Embassy Kabul's full functionality is thus a priority, partly in order to improve responsiveness in crisis situations.

III. Security

a) Military engagement

22. In response to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, and under a United Nations mandate, the NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission helped to stabilise Afghanistan up until the end of 2014. The country had been devastated by civil war, had no government capable of action and no functioning state structures and had become a safe haven for transnational terrorist groups. The mission of the servicemen and women deployed with ISAF to Afghanistan, whose number peaked at more than 100,000, was to provide the requisite level of security and stability.
23. The Bundeswehr was part of this NATO-led mission from the start. As of 2006, Germany assumed special military responsibility as framework nation for Regional Command North. When the security situation deteriorated in 2008 and 2009, NATO's role changed from a stabilisation mission to a combat mission. Germany's contribution increased to more than 5300 troops in 2010. In a collaborative effort that involved international partners who had also sharply increased their troop contributions and the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), the security situation was successfully stabilised.
24. During this period, it was the international troops that for the most part held security responsibility and led the fight against the Taliban. To establish long-term security, however, the ANDSF needed to build the assets and capabilities that were needed to take over full responsibility. That is why the focus of the ISAF mission later became to militarily train, advise and assist the ANDSF. This train, advise and assist approach made it possible to fully hand over security responsibility to the ANDSF by the end of 2014. In accordance with the tasking issued by NATO Allies at their 2012 summit meeting in Chicago, the ISAF mission was completed and transitioned into the new NATO-led Resolute Support Mission. Resolute Support is the framework through which the ANDSF military and political leadership is provided with support to this day. Resolute Support does not include any combat role. At their Warsaw Summit in July 2016, the NATO Heads of State and Government declared they would maintain their military engagement in Afghanistan on this basis.
25. In 2012, the international community had decided to transition the ISAF mission by the end of 2014, to substantially reduce their own security presence and to take on a train, advise and assist role, via Resolute Support, as of 2015. The rapid draw-down created a security vacuum that could not be completely filled by the ANDSF. There has been an increasing number of attacks on government offices, the ANDSF and international troops, and their respective facilities. These attacks have not occurred along fixed front lines, but rather have been random, both in terms of location and timing. Given this situation, the ANDSF are mainly focusing on protecting urban areas, at the expense of

significantly reducing their presence in rural and sparsely populated areas. Since the end of 2016, this strategy has at least enabled them to achieve and maintain a strategic stalemate. The Taliban have been able to gain more influence in rural regions. On the whole, however, the ANDSF now mostly control approximately 60 percent of the territory, which is home to two-thirds of the population. So far, militant groups that have united under the name Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) have not been able to extend their area of influence beyond a few districts in the east (Nangarhar province) and in the north-west (Jowzjan province) – especially due to the strong military pressure that is being exerted by the US-led Operation Freedom's Sentinel, and owing to a lack of support among the local population. That is why these groups are increasingly perpetrating attacks on members of the Shia minority, as retribution for the Afghan Shia militias fighting on the side of the government in Syria, which is supported by Iran.

26. Despite substantial efforts and progress, the ANDSF are still not able to ensure security throughout the country. The ANDSF still need to improve their command and control structures, and they have suffered substantial personnel losses. This shows that they continue to require intensive advisory support.
27. By adopting the ANDSF Roadmap in 2017, the Government of Afghanistan created the basis for permanently increasing the readiness of the ANDSF, and is making targeted efforts to address the core issues its security forces are facing. This includes not only the fight against internal corruption, with a view to increasing the legitimacy of the ANDSF among the Afghan population, but also and especially enhancing its combat capabilities. Since 2016, the Afghan Special Security Forces have conducted the majority of regular combat operations. In cooperation with Afghanistan's own and international air assets, they have been able to achieve substantial victories against the Taliban. According to the ANDSF Roadmap, the size of the Special Security Forces is to be doubled, to approximately 30,000 members, and the Afghanistan Air Force will receive new aircraft. The Air Force, which was established in 2015, has rapidly become an integral part of Afghanistan's military operations, and it is a significant asset in the fight against the Taliban. So far, however, the Air Force has not been received sufficiently staffed, equipped and trained. Staff training courses will be improved, so as to build up a large enough pool of young officers. In addition, the median age of military staff must be reduced, the aim being to improve and modernise leadership skills.
28. Within the framework of the Afghan National Army Trust Fund (ANA Trust Fund) that has been agreed by NATO, the Federal Government has made available investments amounting to more than 450 million euros since 2009 in the form of non-lethal equipment only. It has also declared its willingness to maintain this important support until 2020 to the tune of 80 million euros per year. These investments help to better train the ANDSF by providing adequate infrastructure and suitable training facilities and equipment (e.g. kitchens, lodging, classrooms, teaching material). At a future point in time, an informed decision will need to be taken as to what extend this substantial

reconstruction assistance will be continued.

29. Another way that Germany is remaining strongly engaged is by providing the NATO Secretary General's current Senior Civilian Representative in Afghanistan. He advises the Government of Afghanistan on its policies, also by providing NATO's perspective. His staff includes Bundeswehr personal protection officers.
30. Germany's military engagement is provided exclusively through NATO and on the basis of the Resolute Support strategy. As part of the Federal Government's comprehensive networked approach, Germany's military contribution aims to enhance the effectiveness of the ANDSF. Ongoing efforts to train, advise and assist the ANDSF are designed to enable it to assume long-term security responsibility throughout Afghanistan, so that the Afghan-owned peace process, as well as the civilian reconstruction efforts and development cooperation, are given the time and space they need to be effective.
31. In RC North, Germany is currently the framework nation and receives support from approximately 20 other countries. The main task in the context of NATO's Train, Advise, Assist mission is to advise the Afghan National Army's 209th corps, at various locations in Mazar-e-Sharif, and since the beginning of 2016, also in Kunduz. Moreover, explosive ordnance disposal experts are among the experts being trained at the school of military engineering in Mazar-e-Sharif. In addition to the training mission, the Bundeswehr plays an important role when it comes to implementing two focuses of the ANDSF Roadmap: Within the area of improving leadership culture and capabilities, Germany in January 2018 took over advisory functions at the Command and Staff Academy in Kabul. The Bundeswehr is also substantially contributing to efforts to train and advise the special forces of the Ministry of Interior Affairs and the Ministry of Defense. These activities are already having an effect. For example, after several years of advising the special forces of the Afghan police in Kunduz and Balkh provinces, they are now able to independently conduct operations. Afghanistan and its international partners rely on Germany's key contributions in the north to ensure the proper functioning of the Resolute Support Mission. It would also be helpful if, in the context of ANDSF Roadmap implementation, Germany were to contribute to the planned establishment of a new wing unit of the Afghanistan Air Force at Mazar-e-Sharif in 2018.
32. In all these efforts, the higher threat level that international forces are exposed to has resulted in increased security measures for military advisers, also in RC North. Given the troop ceilings set in the current Bundestag mandate, up to half of the Bundeswehr's necessary train, advise and assist missions therefore cannot be carried out at this time. Owing to force protection limitations, Germany is therefore currently not able to fully meet the commitments it has made. In addition, the force protection capabilities of the ANDSF will need to be boosted during 2018 and 2019 to provide security for the elections, and this additional training, advice and assistance will need to be performed by Resolute Support. Moreover, it has become apparent that advising the ANDSF

requires regional flexibility if the train, advise and assist mission is to be maintained in hot spots such as Kunduz. Germany as a framework nation must be flexible, so that it can fill capability shortfalls that may arise among its multinational partners in the north. What is more, the attacks on the German Consulate General in Mazar-e-Sharif and on the German Embassy in Kabul have shown that current staffing is severely limited; Germany has no military assets at its disposal to react to unexpected situations that might arise.

33. Overall, the only way to successfully provide security in Afghanistan in the long term is to enable the ANDSF to fully assume this responsibility. This is the guiding principle of Afghan ownership. It is the only way to safeguard the progress that has been achieved so far and to create the prerequisites for long-term stability and peaceful development in Afghanistan, as well as for the economic recovery, social reconciliation and rebuilding of state structures of the country. It is in the interest of both Afghanistan and of the international community to achieve this objective. This will require a continued and adequate presence of the international community for the foreseeable future to train and advise the ANDSF.

b) Rebuilding the police force

34. The security situation continues to pose great challenges to Afghanistan's Ministry of Interior Affairs and the police force. These include reducing the high number of officers who are killed, improving coordination with other security authorities, addressing ongoing deficiencies with regard to training and equipment, as well as vigorously fighting abuse of office, corruption and human rights violations.
35. The international community is channelling its support to build up, train and fund the Afghan police force through a number of international partners. The largest donors besides Germany are the United States, Japan and the European Union. Since the end of the European police mission EUPOL, Resolute Support has stepped up its efforts, above all by providing advice to the Ministry of Interior Affairs. The international community's activities are being coordinated by the International Police Coordination Board.
36. The aim in building police capacity is to put at the disposal of the Ministry of Interior Affairs not only its militarily trained special police force, but also a well-trained and equipped civilian police force. Police tasks must be clearly defined and separate from those of the military, and it should be able to reliably maintain the rule of law and win the trust of the people of Afghanistan. Currently, military and policing tasks are not as clearly separated as they should be. Frequently, police officers are sent into combat together with the army to fight anti-government forces. Due to a lack of appropriate training and equipment for this purpose, a disproportionate number of police officers are killed. The ANDSF Roadmap that was developed in 2017 by President Ghani in cooperation with Resolute Support addresses this problem by, for instance, more clearly

delineating between police and military tasks, so that both sides can better perform their duties.

37. Another declared goal of the Afghan Ministry of Interior Affairs is fighting widespread corruption within the Afghan police force. Corruption undermines the population's trust in the work of police officers and that in turn means they cannot be employed to meet the local needs. The Afghan Ministry of Interior Affairs is therefore rigorously investigating the allegations of so-called "ghost" police officers who exist only on paper and who are not, or no longer, employed by the police force. So far, the investigation has been able to verify 122,000 of the registered 146,000 active police officers. The current staffing goal is 157,000 officers. Presently, only some 2.3 percent of police officers are women. Although the aim is to increase this figure, these efforts are hampered by low social acceptance and repeated incidents of sexual harassment and abuse by male colleagues.
38. Besides the efforts to fight corruption, the international community is making a particular effort to provide police officers with civil-policing and rule-of-law training. Moreover, the international community is co-funding the salaries of police officers, via the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA), and those of prison staff. The Afghan Local Police (ALP) are an exception, as their salaries are funded solely by the United States. Germany provides some 60 million euros annually, making it the fourth-largest donor after the United States, Japan and the European Union. LOTFA currently comprises two programmes, one for subsidising salaries and one for capacity-building in the Ministry of Interior Affairs and the police. There are plans to expand these activities to include the fight against corruption and aid for the judiciary.
39. The German Police Project Office (GPPO) in Kabul has since its establishment in 2002 provided advice, training and international coordination with a view to the building up of a civilian Afghan police force. The German Police Project Team (GPPT) had a staff of up to 200 German police officers from both the Federal and the Länder police forces. The GPPT had been conducting basic and further training measures since 2008. The courses took place at four police training centres that Germany helped to establish: Feyzabad, Kunduz, the Sergeant Training Centre (STC) in Mazar-e-Sharif and the Afghan National Police Academy (ANPA) in Kabul. As part of these efforts, curricula were developed that are still in use today at Afghan National Police (ANP) training institutions. Responsibility for the Police Training Centres (PTCs) has been successively handed over to the Afghan authorities: in 2012 for PTC Feyzabad, in 2013 for PTC Kunduz, and in 2014 for STC Mazar-e-Sharif. With the handover of responsibility for STC Mazar-e-Sharif, the German police officers have for the most part completed their Afghan police officer training efforts. Germany's bilateral police project thereby provided basic and further training to more than 73,000 Afghan police officers between 2002 and 2014.

40. The GPPT's current staff of up to 50 police officers are based in the cities of Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif, where they support the Afghan ANPA and STC, the Afghan Border Police (ABP) as well as the leadership of the Afghan Ministry of Interior Affairs and the Afghan Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in the following domains:
- providing strategic policing advice to the Ministry of Interior Affairs and to ANP commanding officers, especially regarding human resources management and leadership;
 - Basic and further training, as well as advice, in the spheres of aviation security, border policing, dog training and handling, counter-IED, document inspection and verification at Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif Airports;
 - Support to the competent Afghan authorities in fighting terrorism, human trafficking and illegal migration, also through the provision of equipment, such as the installation of documentation labs at airports to professionally identify counterfeit documents.;
 - Support of partnership projects between the Afghan National Police Academy (ANPA) and the German Federal Police Academy (BPOLAK), as well as between the Federal Police at Düsseldorf Airport and Mazar-e-Sharif Airport and between Cologne-Bonn Airport and Kabul Airport;
 - Advice and professional support aiming to increase the share of women, and achieve greater acceptance of equal rights for men and women, in the Afghan police force;
 - Cooperation and coordination with national and international partners;
 - Maintaining and expanding the infrastructure projects that have been conducted so far for the Afghan police force.
41. Moreover, Germany funds literacy training for Afghan police officers and projects to promote good relations between police officers and local communities. Since UNICEF terminated its activities in this sphere, Germany is the only remaining international donor and is active in all 34 provinces.
42. The police force must be almost completely rebuilt throughout the country and provided with training for its various policing duties. Given this task, and considering the major security challenges that exist throughout Afghanistan, this remains a long-term effort. Germany is prepared to continue providing support in terms of funding and personnel within the framework of the current agreements and obligations. At the same time, Germany will together with its international partners pursue a step-by-step approach to transferring the various further tasks to the Afghan authorities and police forces.

IV. State-building, civil stabilisation and good governance

43. The framework for a state that effectively guarantees security, law and order, as well as economic development, and thus enjoys legitimacy throughout the country has for the most part been successfully established in the recent years. That said, Afghan state institutions remain weak, also compared to other countries in the region. The security situation, organised crime, and in particular the increasing production and trafficking of drugs, along with the lack of a peace process and uncertainty regarding the international community's continued engagement, pose great challenges to the government. Moreover, corruption and clientelism in Afghan society remain widespread, especially in the country's state institutions.
44. Despite a difficult start, the National Unity Government has meanwhile taken successful steps towards reform: President Ghani has declared the fight against corruption to be his country's top priority. Severe cases of corruption, also those involving high-level government officials, are prosecuted as criminal offences by the newly established Anti-Corruption Justice Center (ACJC). In October 2017, the government presented its national anti-corruption strategy. Key ministries have been tasked with drawing up anti-corruption plans, and the recruitment process for public administration jobs has been made more transparent. In the public finance sector, too, progress has been achieved. There has been a marked increase in tax revenue (up by 50 percent in 2017 compared to 2014). The share of the state budget covered by the Government of Afghanistan could be increased to 38 percent in 2017 (compared to 30 percent the previous year) and is expected to rise to 46 percent in the 2018 fiscal year. The groundwork has been laid for budgetary planning at sub-national and national level. What is more, important legislative reforms have been completed (including criminal law reform). At the same time, the government is working hard to strengthen the position of women in Afghanistan. Plans call for increasing the proportion of women in civil service by two percent annually over the coming years.
45. One area where progress is lacking is that of parliamentary and district council elections, which have been postponed a number of times. The original plans were to hold a constitutional Loya Jirga by 2016. By law, it would comprise representatives of the National Assembly and of the provincial and district councils. On account of the newly-created office of the President within the framework of the National Unity Government, this Loya Jirga was to debate the necessary constitutional amendment. To prepare the way, a new National Assembly and district councils were to be elected (the electoral term of the National Assembly had expired since mid-2015, and it continues to conduct business only on the basis of a presidential decree). The multiple postponement of elections is drawing additional opposition, also from outside the National Assembly. Criticism of the government and the electoral authorities is growing. Parliamentary elections are currently scheduled to be held in the second half of 2018. It is not clear

whether or not this new deadline will be adhered to. In principle, the National Assembly is able to function. At 27 percent, the prescribed quota for women has been met. Because the National Assembly's legitimacy is currently constrained and it has a weak role in the political system, its power is limited. Its members often use their position to personal advantage. In general, the legislative branch suffers from a barely developed party system and a lack of accountability by representatives towards their constituents.

46. Human rights are solidly anchored in Afghanistan's constitution. Afghanistan has signed and/or ratified most of the relevant international agreements – and has attached reservations to some. Afghanistan successfully sought a seat on the United Nations Human Rights Council for the 2018-2020 term. However, implementation of human rights faces obstacles, i.e. the general accommodation of Sharia law, the lack of a body to give definitive interpretations of the constitution and a generally weak judiciary system. The judiciary currently functions only to a very limited extent. Access is not universal, and there are substantial deficiencies with regard to the training of judiciary and law enforcement officers. Although there has been great progress in recent years on the legislative front, the various legal sources are not uniformly or properly applied (codified law, sharia, customary law/tribal law).
47. The aforementioned challenges are key areas for the civilian stabilisation measures that are to be conducted as part of the Stability Pact for Afghanistan (current annual budget: up to 180 million euros) and German development policy (current annual volume: up to 250 million euros). The aim of these measures is to stabilise the country and to aid Afghanistan's long-term economic development. They are also intended to support legitimate political authorities in their efforts to win their constituents' hearts and minds through inclusive approaches and to wean them away from strongmen outside the political system. The Government of Afghanistan must be given the resources to effectively deliver basic services to its people throughout the country, and to provide legal certainty. Moreover, Germany's efforts aim to get the population more involved in decision-making processes. In concrete terms, civilian stabilisation measures help to create a safe environment, improve living conditions in the near future and provide alternatives to war and violence economies. One core aspect of the Federal Government's civilian stabilisation efforts in Afghanistan is building up, equipping and enhancing the literacy of the Afghan police force. A good example of infrastructure that is being built to enhance the state's ability to serve its citizens is the construction and refurbishment of hospitals and medical centres, as well as administrative and government buildings, primarily in northern Afghanistan and with close involvement of the local population and local and regional officials.
48. Justice and adherence to rule-of-law principles are a key part of what the Afghan population expects functioning state structures to provide. The aim of projects to enhance Afghan governance is to stem clientelism and corruption and to create transparent systems for recruiting and paying the salaries of members of the public

administration. With a view to promoting the rule of law, Afghan ministries and authorities are advised on how to reform and implement legislation. Moreover, the Federal Government is supporting efforts to create legal protection, provide more legal information and assistance, above all to women, and to improve the quality of legal education. Public information and other training activities, above all at registered religious schools, help counteract the widely held belief that the national legal system is not Islamic, as opposed to Afghanistan's traditions. In the mining sector, the Federal Government is supporting transparent governance, also by improving the supervision of mining activities and by promoting the Afghan transparency initiative for raw materials. It is also providing funds to university-level training programmes in this field. All this helps the government secure higher long-term tax revenue and counter illegal economic activity. The Federal Government seeks to promote a strong civil society, through which citizens can act as a corrective force and which is a key aspect of democratic governance based on the rule of law.

49. German development cooperation funds go to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), which is run by the World Bank. This fund is essential for rebuilding state structures, promoting good governance and spurring economic development, and therefore also for reducing poverty. The programme's aims include ensuring a functioning public administration and providing basic social services. ARTF funds cover the current costs of the Government of Afghanistan, in particular the salaries of public workers. ARTF resources thereby are an important prerequisite for strengthening the state's structures in general. Germany's contributions to the ARTF, and all disbursements from the ARTF to the Government of Afghanistan, are tied to reform-related benchmarks. This creates specific incentives for the government to bring about tangible and effective improvements in key reform areas – in particular concerning the fight against corruption and the enhancement of economic conditions.
50. Civilian stabilisation projects and projects for the long-term improvement of living conditions and livelihoods also help to promote cross-border cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours. For example, one regional effort involving Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Iran aims to improve living conditions for people living in the border areas, promote cross-border exchange and enhance local administrative work. This is to be achieved through projects in the domains of transportation infrastructure, health care, agriculture and power supply.
51. All Federal Government activities are part of the international donor coordination process and are in line with the respective Afghan reform agenda (Afghan National Peace and Development Framework, or ANPDF), as well as the agreement between the Government of Afghanistan and the international community regarding the objectives of reform (Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework, or SMAF).

52. Despite encouraging results, efforts to stabilise and provide long-term support to structural and social change in Afghanistan face great challenges. This is why the Federal Government has assured Afghanistan that it will continue strengthening Afghan state and civil-society institutions in the coming years, so that they can in the medium term perform its duties well without outside support. Afghan decision-makers will need to assume ever greater responsibility over the next years. When it comes to improving public safety and the ability of ministries and authorities to perform their tasks, fighting corruption and clientelism will remain a key focus.

V. Social and economic development

53. A major and long-term objective of Germany's engagement is helping Afghanistan develop into a society that respects human rights, in particular the rights of women and children, that maintains security and meets its population's basic economic and social needs, and that provides legal certainty and gives its men and women the opportunity to take in the political process.
54. Since the fall of the Taliban, notable progress has been achieved in the social and economic development of Afghanistan. Most Afghan women and men are much better off today than they were in 2001: average life expectancy has risen from 44 to 61 years. While less than one million children attended school in 2001, eight million do today – and more than one third of these are girls. The under-five mortality rate has been reduced by more than half. More people than ever have access to electricity and drinking water. While in 2001 only 5 percent of the population were connected to the power grid, 31 percent are today, and 55 percent have access to clean drinking water. Numerous roads, bridges, irrigation canals and other parts of the infrastructure that were destroyed have been rehabilitated or built from scratch. On the Human Development Index, Afghanistan advanced from position 173 out of 178 (in 2004) to 169 out of 188 (in 2016). Afghanistan's economy, too, saw good initial development during the transitional period, at times even attaining double-digit growth. Average per capita income quintupled from 120 US dollars in 2001 to 608 dollars in 2016. Over the last 17 years, Germany has contributed to this development, and together with the Government of Afghanistan and the international community, Germany has helped lay an important foundation for Afghanistan's social and economic progress.
55. As ISAF troops have been pulled out, however, these positive developments have slowed considerably, and some aspects have even seen a reversal: Since 2013, there has been a marked downturn in economic growth, even though 2016 did see a slight increase. State revenue could be slowly increased during the past two years. But the economy remains sluggish compared to population growth, and this is in particular due to the security situation. Weak state structures are putting at risk the progress that has been achieved on development, and are jeopardising future livelihoods. Afghanistan

remains one of the poorest and economically weakest countries in the world. It remains highly dependent on international aid.

56. To re-stabilise the national economy and make Afghanistan interesting for foreign investors, fundamental economic reform is needed and additional investment must be made in the country's infrastructure, and the economic and investment climate must be improved. Value chains must be built, and in the short and medium term the most suitable sectors for this are services and agriculture. Afghanistan also has sizeable mineral resources (e.g. iron ore and copper), and thanks to its geography it could generate a great deal of renewable energy.
57. Development cooperation with the Federal Government is key to helping create a solid foundation for sustainable and stable economic, political and social development. This cooperation is designed to meet the development priorities of the Government of Afghanistan, including the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF). Its efforts focus on economic promotion, including vocational training, good governance, urban development and community infrastructure, including water and energy supply. Furthermore, the Federal Government is promoting basic education and supports the Government of Afghanistan as it tackles the challenges of increasing internal displacement, including refugees from neighbouring countries and those returning from Europe.
58. The Federal Government wants to achieve tangible and sustainable progress on development, for both the urban and the rural population. Improving the country's economy is an essential aspect for achieving sustainable development, and therefore also long-term peace. Germany's engagement centres around creating permanent employment and income opportunities for all parts of the population. The majority of the Afghan population works in agriculture. However, production levels are low, and there is very little processing of foodstuffs. This is why the Federal Government supports the creation and expansion of value chains for products that can potentially grow productivity and substitute agricultural imports, e.g. wheat, vegetables, poultry, milk and nuts. This support aims to improve the irrigation infrastructure, increase the means of production and everything that is needed to prepare, store, process and market these products. What is more, the Federal Government promotes start-ups and the expansion of small and medium-sized enterprises in a range of economic sectors. Businesses often fail or cannot expand due to a lack of business and technical skills, as well as insufficient access to loans. Against this background, support programmes are implemented in local communities to provide targeted access to financial services, as well as basic and further training.
59. Another aspect of economic promotion and job creation efforts is improving vocational training. Up to now, the quality of formal training has been poor and not tailored to the labour market needs. Therefore, such training often does not lead to employment. By

introducing upgraded basic and further training programmes for teachers and through investment in infrastructure, the Federal Government is helping to improve formal vocational training. At the same time, current structures that function well, such as traditional apprenticeships, are used and further developed. All of this is helping to give trainees much better income opportunities.

60. A key factor for sustainable development in Afghanistan is improving the population's access to essential public infrastructure and services, particularly in rural areas. Despite all of the progress that has been achieved, this access is still severely limited. There is no sufficient supply of clean and affordable drinking water, and the cost of water is high. Moreover, large parts of the country are still not connected to the national power grid, and they are dependent on expensive power sources such as diesel generators. The Federal Government is helping to give the population access to potable water, among other things by strengthening the respective institutional framework. Food security is another focus of the Federal Government's work, and these efforts are substantially contributing to sustainable development in the country. Afghanistan has for 15 years been a focus of aid provided through the Bilateral Trust Fund of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). In cooperation with the FAO, the Federal Government is helping to strengthen agricultural production and to draw up and implement national food strategies. Germany is also supporting the Government of Afghanistan's efforts to substantially increase its power generation capabilities and to become a power hub over the next few years. The aim is to supply urban and rural areas with more clean and environmentally friendly power, and to increase private and public investment in power systems.
61. The framework conditions for the Federal Government's civilian engagement in Afghanistan have however worsened markedly since the withdrawal of ISAF troops. Due to fighting, attacks and the danger of kidnapping, investment and advisory activities can meanwhile only be conducted under tight security conditions. This makes the work of international experts to bring about long-term, sustainable improvement more difficult. The Federal Government therefore designs its civilian stabilisation, reconstruction and development programmes in such a way that they can still be implemented, despite the difficult environment. This is achieved, for example, by concentrating efforts on safe and accessible regions, improving national experts' contributions to project implementation, creating robust and flexible projects, and more closely linking programmes to those of other donors and of the Government of Afghanistan.

VI. (Forced) Migration

62. Afghanistan is one of the world's main countries of origin of refugees. 1.3 million registered Afghan refugees currently live in Pakistan and 950,000 in Iran. There are also between 500,000 and one million Afghan citizens who are not registered as refugees in Pakistan and between 1.5 and two million in Iran. A further 100,000 Afghan citizens live in Turkey. The United Nations estimates the number of internally displaced persons to be just under 1.5 million (as of August 2017).
63. Emigration – voluntary and involuntary – has a long history in Afghanistan. Numbering over 6.5 million people, the Afghan diaspora is one of the largest in the world and is equivalent to 18.4 percent of the overall population. Remittances from the Afghan diaspora are therefore an important source of income for many families and are also a considerable economic factor. In 2017, 479 million US dollars were sent to the country (accounting for 2.3 percent of GDP). The brain drain caused by the ongoing emigration of trained Afghans is a problem for Afghanistan. The level of awareness of Afghan refugees and migrants prior to leaving for Europe is very different. Decisions to leave are often made on the basis of rumours and false expectations. The Federal Government is therefore working to provide potential refugees and migrants with comprehensive information about the realities, both en route and in Europe, as part of its communication abroad.
64. Causes of migration include, in particular, unsatisfactory economic development and corruption, the security situation and high population growth – factors that contribute to high and rising unemployment. Following appreciable waves of emigration in 2015, up to one million Afghans returned from Iran and Pakistan in 2016 and 2017 – in some cases as a result of measures in the host countries, or in hope of improved prospects in Afghanistan. Afghan nationals in Iran have been given improved access to the education system in recent years, while a law was passed in Pakistan enabling Afghan nationals without identity papers to obtain residence status for the first time. At the same time, Pakistan has stepped up its efforts to ensure a swifter return of refugees to Afghanistan. The Federal Government is promoting projects to support peaceful coexistence between Afghan refugees and the local population in Pakistan. Moreover, it has supported the return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan since 2015 in cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The Federal Government also supports projects for Afghan nationals returning from the neighbouring countries Pakistan and Iran and for internally displaced persons within Afghanistan. Like the host communities, they will be supported with the construction of basic infrastructure and training measures that directly improve people's prospects.
65. Afghanistan is one of the main countries of origin of refugees and migrants in Germany. Over 250,000 Afghan nationals are currently resident in Germany (as of 31 December 2017); this figure stood at around 131,500 people at the end of 2015. The

number of asylum-seekers in 2017 (as of 31 December 2017) stood at 18,282 (16,423 of whom were first-time applicants). This represents a dramatic decrease in numbers compared with 2016 (127,892 first-time and subsequent applications) and 2015 (31,902). 14,416 Afghan nationals are currently required to leave Germany (as of 31 December 2017). Following the conclusion of many ongoing asylum and judicial proceedings and a protection rate currently at 44 percent, a further increase in the number of persons required to leave the country is expected.

66. The Federal Government is aware of its commitments and humanitarian commitments, both under international law and towards the international community. At the same time, it is working to curb irregular migration from Afghanistan to Europe and is providing support to internally displaced persons in Afghanistan. In designing its returns policy, including with regard to Afghanistan, the Federal Government is pursuing a coherent approach and is making an interministerial effort that covers all relevant policy areas to increase Afghanistan's willingness to take in returnees. The basis for bilateral cooperation between Germany and Afghanistan on the repatriation and voluntary return of refugees is the joint declaration of intent of 2 October 2016 on cooperation in the field of migration between the Governments of Germany and Afghanistan. Cooperation with the Afghan side on migration issues is generally good, and with regard to specific repatriation measures it is constructive and pragmatic. The committee that was established to implement the joint declaration of intent has managed to improve the repatriation process.
67. Currently, only criminals, people who pose a threat, and those who categorically refuse to allow their identity to be established are repatriated. This is in line with what was agreed between the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Federal Minister of the Interior in early June 2017. At the 206th meeting of the Standing Conference of the Interior Ministers of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany that same month, the Länder declared their support for this approach. In 2017, the number of repatriations was increased, to a total of 121 (2016: 67 persons).
68. In addition to the expected increased number of Afghan nationals who will be required to leave Germany, the number of refugees voluntarily returning to Afghanistan is also set to rise (2015: 308; 2016: 3319; 2017: 1119). In addition to the financial assistance that promotes voluntary return through the REAG/GARP¹ programme of the Federal Government and the Länder, Afghan citizens that return to their home country can also apply for financial support from the Federal programme StarthilfePlus. The European programme ERIN (European Reintegration Network) provides reintegration assistance for voluntary returnees and repatriated individuals, in the form of benefits in kind (including an arrival service and help with social, medical and legal issues, and vocational

¹ Reintegration and Emigration Programme for Asylum-Seekers in Germany (REAG), Government Assisted Repatriation Programme (GARP). Both programmes are being organised by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), at the request of the Federal Government and of the Länder.

training, as well as help with finding employment). The Returning to New Opportunities programme helps those who have no prospects of being allowed, or who do not desire, to stay in Germany get off to a good start in Afghanistan and thereby supports voluntary return to the country from Germany, with the aim of permanent reintegration. From 2018, advisory services will be set up in Germany and in Afghanistan in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration. These offices will help smooth the transition for those returning to Afghanistan and will help people get on a sound economic and social footing.

VII. Regional cooperation and the Afghan peace process

69. It will only be possible to contain the violent conflict in Afghanistan in the long term and channel it into a political discourse through an Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process. This requires the commencement of talks between the Afghan Government and the insurgent groups that are prepared to do so. An Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process must culminate in an agreement on the cessation of violence, the credible severance of all relations with transnational terrorist organisations, and a constitution that continues to protect universal human rights, especially the rights of women and children. What is more, a process of this kind can only be successful if it is respected and supported by all major international stakeholders involved in Afghanistan's future. In particular, the neighbouring countries must assume joint responsibility for the stability of the region and refrain from promoting or tolerating in any way militant groups in Afghanistan that are not under government control.
70. The Afghan Government has, on repeated occasions, declared its willingness to engage in comprehensive talks with all insurgent groups, without stipulating preconditions – such as a ceasefire or recognition of the constitution – for this. The fact that this kind of process can meet with success is demonstrated by the peace agreement reached with the militant group Hezb-e Islami led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar in 2016 after negotiations taking place over a number of years. The Taliban has also committed itself to a negotiated solution in principle and has mandated members of its political commission to this end. However, the Taliban refuses to recognise the legitimacy of the Afghan Government and has, to date, therefore insisted on holding direct talks with the US on a withdrawal of troops. In contrast to al-Qaida and IS, the Taliban is not seeking to become involved in the global terrorist Jihad, but to achieve the withdrawal of foreign troops and the establishment of an “Islamic system of government”, without defining this in any detail. In the annual resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly and elsewhere, the international community has expressed its joint support for an “Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process”.
71. An Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process provides an opportunity to stabilise the security situation in Afghanistan in the longer term and to fight transnational

terrorism effectively. The immense human resource and financial outlay that safeguarding security currently requires could be invested in economic development. Regional trade relations could benefit from this. Progress in a peace process would thus also make it possible to reduce German and international military and, in the longer term, civilian engagement in Afghanistan.

72. The path towards achieving this is a long and difficult one as experiences in Afghanistan and comparable contexts have shown. A wide range of efforts in recent years have failed thus far to get a dialogue process between the Afghan Government and the Taliban under way. For example, the High Peace Council was established in 2010 to mediate negotiations while a peace and reintegration programme was set up to enable Taliban fighters willing to return to the country to re-integrate into Afghan society. For the most part, the Taliban rejected these initiatives. International efforts, in which Germany played a major role, culminated in an agreement in 2013 to open a Taliban representative office in Doha. However, the project failed due to disagreement over the public image of the office (flag and self-designation). Nevertheless, the Taliban representatives who remained in Doha assisted Qatar's mediation efforts, which led to the release of US soldier Bowe Bergdahl.
73. Efforts resumed after President Ghani took office resulted in initial talks between representatives of the Afghan Government and the Taliban held in Murree, Pakistan, in July 2015 with observers from China, Pakistan and the US. The talks were discontinued, however, after it became apparent that Mullah Omar, the founder of the Taliban and on whose behalf the representatives had appeared in Murree, had died some time previously. In December 2015, Afghanistan, China, Pakistan and the US formed a Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG). However, it was not possible to get the Taliban to enter into talks within this framework. In May 2016, the new Taliban leader Mullah Mansour was killed in a US drone attack. International consultations on the peace process in various formats were followed, at the invitation of the Afghan Government, by the first round of the Kabul Process for Peace and Security Cooperation in Kabul on 6 June 2017, which was attended by 26 countries and international organisations, including Germany. While this established an international framework for a peace process, the Afghan Government's efforts to launch official direct talks with the Taliban or Taliban groups have not yet been successful.
74. It is therefore important, on the one hand, to continue to exert political and military pressure on the insurgent groups to commence negotiations. On the other hand, the necessary conditions and incentives for commencing promising and face-saving talks must be created. To the extent that this is desired by the Afghan parties, Germany will assist this process where it is able to do so, including with a project to build capacity for negotiating teams that is already under way. Moreover, the dialogue on a future peaceful order must be intensified among Afghanistan's civil society and policy-makers. The risk that political power shared by the Taliban will lead to a restriction of human

rights or an escalation of ethnic tensions must be counteracted at an early stage. As chair of the International Contact Group on Afghanistan and a member of the Kabul Process, Germany will work to ensure that a future Afghan-owned peace process is supported by a united international community.

75. The tangible increase in Afghan and international commitment to peace is cause for cautious optimism. The Afghan Government is preparing a strategy to this end within the framework of the Kabul Process. The build-up of the Afghan security forces and the US counterterrorism mission Freedom's Sentinel have recently stepped up military pressure on the Taliban. The new US administration has declared its willingness to seek a political solution to the conflict in principle, although it considers this to be a realistic prospect only after a change in the military situation. The existence of IS groups in Afghanistan, which are being fought by the Taliban, could prove to be an incentive for achieving understanding. On the other hand, increasing tensions within the Taliban are hampering efforts to commence negotiations.
76. The involvement of countries in the region is decisive for a political solution to the conflict. Afghan militant groups can continue to rely on support from abroad and in safe havens in neighbouring countries in addition to their human resources and financial base in parts of Afghanistan. Heightened geopolitical antagonism in recent years – such as between Pakistan and India, Iran and Saudi Arabia, and Russia and the US – has had a negative impact on Afghanistan. Relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan are of paramount importance. Despite ongoing efforts, these relations continue to be strained by mutual accusations of support for militant groups, border disputes, the significant Afghan refugee population in Pakistan and each country's respective relations with India. Pakistan's amendments to its refugee policy and border management could provide impetus for a reorientation of Afghan-Pakistani relations.
77. Projects aimed at developing regional transport and energy infrastructure have raised hopes of improving regional cooperation in recent years. The Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process and the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA) serve as regional discussion forums in which Germany is also involved. Examples of concrete investment projects include the Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project (CASA-1000), development policy support for high-voltage line infrastructure facilitating the import of electricity from Afghanistan's northern neighbours, the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline (TAPI), rail links to Central Asia and the expansion of transport infrastructure via the Pakistani port of Gwadar as part of the Chinese One Belt, One Road initiative and via the Iranian port of Chabahar. The Federal Government will continue to actively support the neighbouring countries' commitment to Afghanistan, including in the form of tripartite projects. Intensifying coordination with China to promote Afghanistan's civil stabilisation, reconstruction and development are among the measures planned. In the dialogue being conducted with important countries in the region such as Pakistan, Iran and

Russia, it is important to work towards constructive cooperation in such areas as combating terrorism and drug trafficking while taking their legitimate interests into account.