

## Nation-building amid insurgency ‘an uphill struggle’ for Afghanistan – UN envoy

10 March 2017 – The United Nations envoy for Afghanistan today highlighted both the visible progress the conflict-torn country has made and the challenges lie ahead, urging the Government to redouble efforts while calling for continued international political and financial support.

“The Government has to pursue both an inclusive peace process and economic growth against the backdrop of an intensifying insurgency and worsening security,” said Tadamichi Yamamoto, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative in Afghanistan, during a UN Security Council quarterly debate on the situation in that country.

Mr. Yamamoto said that the National Unity Government – almost halfway through its five-year term – has made visible steps forward on anti-corruption, the electoral process and women’s economic empowerment.

“Fortunately, the ground is being prepared to make Afghanistan a success,” he stressed.

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), headed by Mr. Yamamoto, will launch its first anti-corruption report, titled *Afghanistan’s Other Battlefield: The Fight against Corruption* soon. The report will highlight the Government’s achievements in addressing corruption, and recommends options for further progress, he explained.

The Government has committed to holding parliamentary elections which are seen as fair, inclusive and transparent by the Afghan people, he said, noting that the commissioners of the Independent Election Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission have been appointed.



Special Representative and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Tadamichi Yamamoto, briefs the Security Council. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

Afghanistan remains one of the most difficult places in the world to be a woman, he said. However, just two days ago, on International Women’s Day, the Government launched a national plan that recognizes women as key economic actors.

The deteriorating security situation remains of great concern, he pointed out, urging the Taliban to enter peace talks without preconditions and warning against attacks by foreign fighters, including the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh).

Last year, UNAMA recorded the worst number of civilian casualties since record-keeping began nearly a decade ago.

Deteriorating security also led to the highest-ever level of internal displacement in 2016. More than 650,000 Afghans were displaced. Returns from Pakistan exceeded 620,000 people. Displacements and returns for 2017 are likely to remain at these levels.

Developing a nation while fighting an insurgency is an uphill struggle, he emphasized, noting that due in part to the worsening security situation over the past two years, service delivery has become increasingly difficult. "We have witnessed some downward trends in key indicators, such as access to health clinics and education facilities," he said.

More focused action on governance, social services and private sector development to promote equitable growth will be necessary, he said.

He urged the countries concerned, particularly in the neighbourhood, to support the Afghan Government's interest in the intensified regional peace effort, and asked the Council to renew UNAMA's mandate, which expires on 17 March.

UNAMA is mandated to support the Afghan Government and the people of Afghanistan as a political mission that provides 'good offices' among other key services. 'Good offices' are diplomatic steps the UN takes publicly and in private, drawing on its independence, impartiality and integrity, to prevent international disputes from arising, escalating or spreading.

UNAMA also assists the process of peace and reconciliation; monitors and promotes human rights, including the protection of civilians in armed conflict; promotes good governance; and encourages regional cooperation.