

Speech: “Despite years of progress, Afghanistan continues to face tough security and development challenges.”

Statement by Ambassador Jonathan Allen, UK Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, at the Security Council briefing on Afghanistan

Thank you Mr President.

And thank you Special Representative Yamamoto for your briefing today. At the outset I want to express my gratitude, and that of my government, for the work that you and your team are doing in extremely challenging circumstances. I thank you too Foreign Minister Rabbani for your intervention today.

As you have both made clear, we simply cannot afford to lose sight of Afghanistan. Despite years of progress, Afghanistan continues to face tough security and development challenges. And the human cost, after years of fighting, years of violence, only continues to grow.

So our work is not done. And it is clear that UNAMA still has a vital part to play. But just as Afghanistan today is not the same as it was 10 years ago, it is right that UNAMA changes too to fit the current realities on the ground. So we welcome the review into how the mission can best support Afghanistan in a way that aligns with the government’s own priorities.

We share much of the analysis in the review, with its focus on streamlining the work of the Mission towards a targeted set of outcomes. The report contains a number of recommendations that should strengthen its work – the key thing now is implementation.

We will continue our close work with UNAMA on donor coordination, rule of law, anti-corruption and support for human rights, especially women’s rights. We welcome recognition of the importance of the national civilian presence offered by UNAMA’s network of field offices and the UK strongly supports a continued national presence. These offices are an important symbol to local communities. They will also have a role to play in delivering successful elections in 2018 and 2019, and can make a contribution to underpinning local peace negotiations in the future.

The report sets out three strategic priorities, corresponding to support for political stability, peace, and economic and social development. We believe that putting greater focus on support for an Afghan-led peace process is the right way forward.

Only by establishing a credible peace process can Afghanistan move forward. We all have a role to play in that, including the UN. We very much hope therefore that members of this Council can agree to adjust the mandate of UNAMA in order to incorporate these recommendations. This would ensure that

UNAMA is better able to focus on the critical task of supporting the peace process. We look forward to discussing this with Council members in the weeks ahead.

Mr President,

Before concluding I want to say a word on the outcome of the US South Asia strategy review.

The UK and US are close partners in Afghanistan, so we welcome the US's long term commitment to the people and government there. Despite the challenges, which we have heard a lot about today, we agree that it is important that we continue to provide support on issues such as security, development and governance. This is crucial to building a stable Afghan state and reducing the terrorist threat to us all.

It's in all our interests that Afghanistan becomes safer and more prosperous: that's why we announced our own troop increase back in June and confirmed development support of up to a billion dollars to 2020.

We also welcome the restated commitment that – ultimately – the only way to a political settlement will be through negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taleban. This is why we encourage you, Foreign Minister Rabbani and your colleagues in government to take this opportunity to reach out to the Taleban to establish a credible peace process.

We owe it to the people of Afghanistan who have suffered so much during decades of violence, to do all that can be done to institute a peace process. It will be beholden on all of us, within this Council and in the UN system more broadly, and of course the government of Afghanistan to support such a peace process.

Thank you.