

ISAF's Strategic Vision

Declaration by the Heads of State and Government of the Nations contributing to the UN-mandated NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan

1. We gather in Bucharest to reaffirm our determination to help the people and the elected Government of Afghanistan build an enduring stable, secure, prosperous and democratic state, respectful of human rights and free from the threat of terrorism. Afghanistan is the Alliance's key priority. We recognised after the tragic events of 11 September 2001, that Euro-Atlantic and broader international security is tied to Afghanistan's stability and future. Our presence in Afghanistan is at the request of the Government of Afghanistan and mandated by the United Nations. Neither we nor our Afghan partners will allow extremists and terrorists such as the Taliban or al-Qaeda, to regain control of Afghanistan or use it as a base for terror that threatens all of our people and has been felt in many of our countries and beyond. As we help Afghanistan rebuild, our guiding principles are:
 - a firm and shared long-term commitment;
 - support for enhanced Afghan leadership and responsibility;
 - a comprehensive approach by the international community, bringing together civilian and military efforts; and
 - increased cooperation and engagement with Afghanistan's neighbours, especially Pakistan.

We welcome President Hamid Karzai and United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon along with his Special Representative Kai Eide to this Summit and reaffirm our shared vision for Afghanistan.

2. In helping the Afghan people build security today, we are defending basic values we all share, including freedom, democracy and human rights as well as respect for the views and beliefs of others. While much remains to be done, Afghanistan has made important strides in developing its democracy and improving the lives of its citizens; its Government is strengthening its capacity in these areas. A reconciliation process for national unity has begun and basic security and infrastructure have improved. Over the past six years, access to health care has increased tenfold; access to education is up six times and women again have rights protected by law. Afghan and international forces from 40 countries, working side-by-side, are creating security conditions that make this progress possible. Nevertheless, security challenges remain. Violent extremists continue to attack fragile governmental institutions and the people of Afghanistan. They increasingly revert to indiscriminate terror attacks and intimidation but Afghanistan's and our capacity to counter them continues to grow.
3. Our vision of success is clear: extremism and terrorism will no longer pose a threat to stability; Afghan National Security Forces will be in the lead and self-sufficient; and the Afghan Government will be able to extend the reach of good governance, reconstruction, and development throughout the country to the benefit of all its citizens. This declaration is supported by a medium-term, internal political-military plan - consistent with the Afghanistan Compact and the Afghan National Development Strategy - which will be updated regularly and against which we will measure progress.

Our shared long-term commitment

4. We will continue to assist the Government of Afghanistan in further establishing and maintaining a secure environment and extending good governance. To enhance our security effort we will:
 - support each other in sharing the burden in Afghanistan;
 - provide our military commanders the tools they need for success by filling remaining ISAF shortfalls including forces, training teams and enablers;
 - provide maximum possible flexibility of use of our forces by the ISAF Commander;
 - continue to ensure that every measure is taken to avoid civilian casualties; and
 - enhance our capacity to counter extremist propaganda and communicate more effectively our goals, accomplishments and remaining challenges to Afghan and international audiences.

Enhancing Afghan Leadership

5. Only Afghan-led security forces and institutions can ensure the rule of law in the long term. The Afghan National Army is increasingly demonstrating the ability to successfully plan and conduct complex operations with our forces in support. As Afghanistan's security forces become increasingly capable of leading and sustaining operations independently, we expect ISAF's role will be able to evolve to one primarily of training and mentoring. We welcome the growing international focus on building the capacity of the Afghan police which are vital for the stability and security of the nation. In support of all this, we will:
 - provide the training teams and help provide the equipment needed to meet the goal of an effective 80,000 - strong Afghan Army by 2010;
 - work towards progressively transferring lead security responsibility throughout the country to Afghan forces, supported by ISAF, as appropriate conditions are met and Afghan capacity permits; we accordingly welcome Afghanistan's expressed intention to assume lead security responsibility for Kabul as soon as feasible;
 - encourage the appointment of a senior Afghan military officer to ISAF Headquarters when circumstances permit;
 - assist the development of effective civilian-controlled security and defence institutions including through the NATO-Afghanistan Cooperation Programme;
 - assist the development of the Afghan National Police within our means and capabilities and in close coordination with relevant international actors, where appropriate;
 - support the Government of Afghanistan in building capacity to communicate more effectively and respond to extremist propaganda;
 - help strengthen Afghan institutions required to fully establish the rule of law, protect human rights and promote our shared values, while respecting Afghan culture and traditions;
 - provide security support to upcoming elections in Afghanistan; and
 - continue to support Afghan-led efforts to tackle the narcotics problem.

Enhanced coordination

6. There can be no lasting security without development and no development without security. Success requires a comprehensive approach across security, governance and development efforts and between all local and international partners in support of the Afghan Government. We will intensify our contribution to such a comprehensive approach. To this end, we:
 - welcome United Nations Security Council Resolution 1806 which sharpens the UN Mission in Afghanistan's mandate and decides to strengthen cooperation with ISAF;
 - look forward to working closely with UN Special Representative of the Secretary General Kai Eide and the UN Mission in Afghanistan as it further expands throughout the country, and in support of its lead role in coordinating the overall international civilian effort, improved civil-military coordination, political outreach and governance;
 - will work on more regular consultations with all actors involved in Afghanistan as appropriate and in close coordination with the Afghan Government; and,
 - welcome the upcoming Paris Conference that will review progress on and strengthen international efforts to further implement the Afghanistan Compact.
7. Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) play a significant role in enabling security, governance and development. We pledge to provide all the PRTs needed, enhance their unity of effort, strengthen their civilian component and further align their development strategies with Afghan Government priorities until such a time as Afghan Government institutions are strong enough to render PRTs unnecessary.

Afghanistan's neighbours and the Region

8. Afghanistan's neighbours have an important role to play in helping Afghanistan build a more stable and secure future. The threats of violent extremism and narcotics are not Afghanistan's alone. The region stands to benefit when these threats are dealt with effectively. To help foster a long-term regional approach to security challenges and cooperation, we:
 - call on Afghanistan's neighbours to act resolutely in support of the Afghan Government's efforts to build a stable Afghanistan with secure borders;
 - look forward to deepening our engagement with Afghanistan's neighbours, particularly Pakistan;
 - support efforts to improve security and stability along the Afghanistan/Pakistan border, and,
 - encourage further cooperation and intensified dialogue between Afghanistan and Pakistan including through the Jirga mechanisms, the Ankara process and the Tripartite Commission.

Conclusion

9. We as Allies and Partners stand united in our firm commitment to support the Afghan people fulfil their aspirations for a better life. The Afghan Government and people are taking increasing responsibility for the country's security, reconstruction and development. Together we will ensure they achieve the future they have long been denied and thereby bring greater security to all of our people.