

Joint Statement by President Barack Obama and President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan

January 11, 2013

At the invitation of President Obama, President Karzai and his delegation visited Washington January 8–11, 2013. President Karzai's visit comes at an important juncture for both our nations, as we take steps to further strengthen an enduring partnership as sovereign nations, and based upon recognition of our shared interests and shared security.

In their meetings today, President Obama and President Karzai discussed a strategic vision for a secure, stable and prosperous Afghanistan and reaffirmed the U.S.-Afghanistan Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement signed in May 2012. Further, the Leaders' discussion emphasized a convergence of interests and vision. The two Presidents reviewed the security and economic transitions underway in Afghanistan, election preparations, evolving threats and opportunities in the region, and reaffirmed shared commitments to U.S. and Afghan strategic objectives: advancing peace, security, reconciliation, and regional cooperation; strengthening Afghanistan's democratic institutions; and supporting Afghanistan's long-term economic and social development.

Security Transition

During their meetings, the Presidents welcomed recent improvements in Afghanistan's security environment. The Leaders welcomed Afghan security forces' increasing assumption of lead responsibility, noting the marked progress made in the growth and capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). Exceeding initial expectations, Afghan forces began leading the majority of operations in July 2012 and now lead approximately 80% of operations. In February, in conjunction with the fourth tranche of transition, the ANSF is expected to have the lead in securing nearly 90% of the Afghan population.

Consistent with Afghan priorities, Leaders at the Chicago Summit committed to mark a milestone in mid-2013 when the ISAF mission would shift from combat to support. President Obama welcomed President Karzai's desire to mark this milestone this spring, when the ANSF are expected to assume the operational lead across Afghanistan, and ISAF will move into an advisor-support role. This milestone would coincide with announcing the fifth and final tranche of transition, which would commence implementation in the summer, subject to final NATO and Afghan approval.

At the time of the milestone, most unilateral U.S. combat operations should end, with U.S. forces pulling back their patrols from Afghan villages. Both Leaders recognized that, as the Afghan security forces take greater responsibility for security, improving the quality of the ANSF, including the accelerated provision of appropriate equipment and enablers, remains a key priority.

Building upon significant progress in 2012 to transfer responsibility for detentions to the Afghan Government, the Presidents committed to placing Afghan detainees under the sovereignty and control of Afghanistan, while also ensuring that dangerous fighters remain off the battlefield. President Obama reaffirmed that the United States continues to provide assistance to the Afghan detention system. The two Presidents also reaffirmed their mutual

commitment to the lawful and humane treatment of detainees, and their intention to ensure proper security arrangements for the protection of Afghan, U.S., and coalition forces.

Economic Transition

The Leaders discussed the significant development gains in Afghanistan over the past decade and the need for continued progress on a foundation of sustainable economic growth and fiscal self-reliance from Transition in 2014 and through the Transformation Decade that follows. Afghanistan's economic strategy is focused on investing in its human capital to lead the country's institutions and to create an enabling environment for inclusive economic growth and investment, to harness the private sector, entrepreneurs, and natural wealth for the creation of a prosperous country. To this end, the Presidents reaffirmed the commitments made in Bonn, Chicago, and Tokyo, including long-term economic and security assistance in the context of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework.

President Karzai affirmed his view that the international community's assistance must be effective, efficient, and sustainable, and he stressed the critical importance of Afghan commitments to build a stable, democratic society, based on the rule of law, respect for the rights of all Afghan citizens, including women, an effective and independent judiciary and good governance, including progress in social development and the shared fight against corruption.

President Obama reiterated the U.S. commitment to support Afghan stability by strengthening Afghanistan's economic foundations and supporting Afghan reforms to achieve sustainable development and self-sufficiency. He reaffirmed the conclusions of the Tokyo Conference, including that the U.S. align 80 percent of aid with Afghan priorities and channel at least 50 percent of development assistance through the national budget of the Afghan Government.

Elections 2014

During the Leaders' meetings, President Karzai outlined the Government of Afghanistan's plans to hold free, fair, inclusive, and democratic elections in 2014. The Leaders reviewed preparations for the 2014 elections and agreed that independent Afghan institutions are to lead election preparations and implementation, in close consultation with legitimate stakeholders in the democratic process. President Obama welcomed the Afghan Independent Election Commission's establishment of April 5, 2014 as the date for presidential and provincial council elections, and he reiterated that the United States' role is not to support any particular candidate but to support a fair and inclusive electoral process.

Peace and Reconciliation

The Presidents reaffirmed that Afghan-led peace and reconciliation is the surest way to end violence and ensure lasting stability of Afghanistan and the region. Noting progress in the process of peace and reconciliation, they stressed the importance of accelerating efforts, including by countries in the region that have a role to play in support of the Afghan peace process. Through the High Peace Council, the Afghan Government will intensify its efforts to promote the peace process. The Leaders said that they would support an office in Doha for the purpose of negotiations between the High Peace Council and the authorized representatives of the Taliban. In this context, the Leaders called on the armed opposition to join a political process, including by taking those steps necessary to open a Taliban office. They urged the Government of Qatar to facilitate this effort. The two Presidents reiterated that the outcomes of peace and reconciliation must respect the historic achievements that Afghanistan has made

over the past decade, including protecting the rights that all citizens of Afghanistan, both men and women, guaranteed under the constitution. As a part of the outcome of any process, the Taliban and other armed opposition groups must end violence, break ties with Al Qaeda, and accept Afghanistan's constitution.

Regional Environment

President Obama and President Karzai recognized the important role of the region in supporting Afghanistan's progress towards stability and prosperity. In this context, President Obama expressed support for Afghanistan's efforts to promote regional cooperation to foster a region that is secure, free from extremism and radicalization and that enjoys greater economic integration. The Leaders expressed support for Afghanistan's emerging role as a focal point for trade and economic activity at the Heart of Asia. The Leaders also reiterated that the goals of the U.S.-Afghanistan partnership are fully consistent with Afghanistan's vision for building strong and cooperative ties with its neighbors and regional partners.

Bilateral Security Agreement

As we further develop the U.S.-Afghanistan partnership, the United States and Afghanistan look forward to expanded cooperation under the auspices of the U.S.-Afghanistan Bilateral Commission, through 2014 and beyond. President Obama and President Karzai committed to conclude the Bilateral Security Agreement as soon as possible, reaffirming that such an agreement is in both countries' interest. They discussed the possibility of a post-2014 U.S. presence that is sustainable, that supports a capable and effective Afghan National Security Force, and that continues to pressure the remnants of al-Qa'ida and its affiliates. The scope and nature of any possible post-2014 U.S. presence, legal protections for U.S. forces, and security cooperation between the two countries is to be specified in the Bilateral Security Agreement. The U.S. reaffirmed that it does not seek permanent bases in Afghanistan.

Conclusion

President Obama reaffirmed the United States' respect for Afghanistan's sovereignty and reiterated that as Afghanistan takes full responsibility for its security and development, the United States continues to be committed to supporting the Afghan people. Both Presidents paid tribute to the sacrifices made by Afghanistan, the United States, and our international partners in efforts to achieve a stable, prosperous, peaceful, sovereign and democratic future for Afghanistan, as well as security for the international community. The United States and Afghanistan intend to continue working together to achieve the full promise of our enduring partnership.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Categories: Joint Statements : Afghanistan, President Karzai.

Names: Karzai, Hamid.

Subjects: Afghanistan : Afghan military and security forces; Afghanistan : Democracy efforts; Afghanistan : Detention facilities, transfer of responsibility to Afghan forces; Afghanistan : Economic growth and development; Afghanistan : Former regime; Afghanistan : Governmental accountability and transparency, strengthening efforts; Afghanistan : International diplomatic efforts; Afghanistan : International Security Assistance Force; Afghanistan : President; Afghanistan : Reconciliation efforts; Afghanistan : Relations with U.S.; Afghanistan : Security cooperation with U.S.; Afghanistan : U.S. assistance; Afghanistan : U.S.

military forces :: Casualties; Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Afghanistan : Women, status; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Qatar : Afghan Taliban office in Doha; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist group.

DCPD Number: DCPD201300011.