

# RESOLUTE SUPPORT FOREIGN MINISTERS STATEMENT ON AFGHANISTAN

*05. December 2018*

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1. We, the Foreign Ministers of the nations contributing to the Resolute Support Mission, met today in Brussels to reaffirm our steadfast commitment to ensuring long-term security and stability in Afghanistan. We express our utmost appreciation for the crucial contribution of the men and women serving in our Resolute Support Mission and in the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. We pay tribute to those who have lost their lives or have been wounded in support of a better future for Afghanistan.
2. We reaffirm the decisions taken at our Summit in July 2018 on our continued support to Afghanistan, and we recall Afghanistan's commitments, including to continue on the path to reform covering, inter alia, the promotion of human rights, good and inclusive governance, and combating corruption.

## **Elections**

3. As the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is taking further steps to create stability and security, and to promote peace, Afghanistan has entered a critical phase in building and consolidating democracy. We recognise the parliamentary elections held in October 2018 as a clear sign of Afghan support for the democratic process. Voters, one third of them female, defied threats of violence and went to polling stations to shape the future of their country. This is an encouraging sign of their determination and ownership.
4. We recognise that these elections were the first to be completely led, administered and secured by Afghans. We praise the efforts by the Afghan security forces, who provided the security required for the elections to take place, and stood firm in the face of the numerous attacks by Taliban and other insurgent groups seeking to disrupt the election and discourage Afghans from voting.
5. We condemn in the strongest possible terms all acts of violence committed by insurgent and terrorist groups in Afghanistan before, during and after the electoral process. These forms of violence are intended to prevent the Afghan people from achieving a secure and peaceful future.
6. We recognise the important steps taken by the Afghan authorities to make these elections more transparent, credible and secure. Afghanistan, for the first time, used polling centre-based voter registration. However, there were significant shortcomings, and organisational changes are required prior to holding the presidential election next year. We specifically call upon the Afghan authorities to address the problems caused by fraud and procedural weaknesses, and to update and audit voter registration databases for the affected provinces. We encourage all stakeholders to engage in the process fairly and in good faith. Successful elections will further reinforce Afghanistan's path towards stability, security and peace.

## **Peace**

7. With the historic ceasefire during Eid al-Fitr, the people of Afghanistan have shown the world that they want peace, and that the violence can be stopped. We welcome the

Afghan government's unprecedented offer of unconditional peace talks with the Taliban, and we fully support their aim to end the conflict by reaching an inclusive peace agreement based on national consensus. We emphasize the particular importance of fully including women in political, peace and reconciliation processes. We commend the Afghan government's continued commitment to the peace process and encourage continued efforts to ensure that the interests of all stakeholders are fully represented and included.

8. We remind the Taliban that they will never achieve their ambitions through fighting and emphasise that there is no military solution to the conflict. The Taliban must join their fellow Afghans, including the Government of Afghanistan, at the negotiating table, and play a meaningful role in an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led political process that results in a mutual understanding about the future of their country.
9. Recognising the contributions and sacrifices made, NATO Allies and Operational Partners will respect and support an inclusive, negotiated and durable political settlement led by Afghans, which ends violence, ensures Afghanistan is never again used as a platform for terrorist attacks against any other country, and protects the human rights of all Afghan citizens, notably those of women and children in accordance with the Afghan constitution and international norms and standards. NATO Allies and Operational Partners acknowledge that the future military role of the international community in Afghanistan will be among the issues to be discussed in an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process. We affirm our support for the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan to initiate negotiations for a political settlement and the initiative of the United States Government, led by Special Representative Zalmay Khalilzad, to bring the parties into negotiations to achieve a political settlement.
10. A stable, peaceful and secure Afghanistan that is safe from the threat of terrorism is in the shared interest of the Alliance and the entire region. Regional actors have the means to foster peace and stability in Afghanistan and we welcome their support for a negotiated political solution, as was stated on 28 November during the Geneva Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan. We encourage Afghanistan's neighbours to contribute to regional stability by respecting and fully supporting an Afghan peace and reconciliation process, and by providing support for Afghan economic development. We also note and support regionally owned and led efforts to achieve economic stability and development through the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, and the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan. We also urge Afghanistan's neighbours to deny any form of support for the insurgency.
11. Taking note of the fact that success will require continued financial and logistical backing, NATO Allies and Operational Partners remain firmly committed to sustaining and bolstering the Afghan forces' capabilities to eliminate the threat of terrorism in all its forms in order to provide security for Afghan citizens and stability in the region.

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Source: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_161123.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_161123.htm?selectedLocale=en)