

Statement delivered by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland Mr. Jacek Czaputowicz at the Security Council on 19th January, 2018:

“Building regional partnership in Afghanistan and Central Asia as a model to link security and development”

Let me start by congratulating you, Mr. President, and your country, Kazakhstan, on your successful presidency of the Council and commend Astana’s initiative to organize this timely debate on building regional partnership in Afghanistan and Central Asia. I also highly commend your leadership in convening the recent Security Council visiting mission to Afghanistan, which contributed greatly to this debate.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and his continuous commitment to conflict prevention and sustaining peace.

First, I would like to stress the importance of regional cooperation as an effective means not only of promoting the economic and social development of Afghanistan, but also to promote peace and stability. From my country’s perspective, the diversification of economic ties in Central Asian countries serves both their sovereignty and interests well. Central Asia and Afghanistan’s location presents a unique opportunity to enhance direct and multinational cooperation aimed at constructing transport and logistics infrastructure that will interconnect Europe and Asia. Those valuable links will facilitate the exchange of not only goods but also ideas and people-to-people contacts as well as mutual understanding.

We are glad to note the recent developments in the region in the field of connectivity. Projects such as the Turkmenistan — Afghanistan — Pakistan — India pipeline, CASA-1000, the railway to Herat and the air-cargo corridor between Afghanistan and India are excellent examples of the diverse benefits that regional cooperation can bring. We believe that these investments will not only contribute to the region’s prosperity, but will also build trust between neighbours.

In this context, we would like to commend the Governments of Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey for having signed the Lapis Lazuli Corridor Agreement. We believe that this vital document will facilitate one of the most effective ways of linking Afghanistan to European markets as well as help diminish its dependence on neighbouring countries in terms of transit and transportation.

We must remember that even the most ambitious agenda with regard to regional economic connectivity may fail owing to an unstable security situation, as a secure, stable and prosperous Afghanistan is a prerequisite for peace and stability in the region as a whole. We are alarmed by the continuing high level of violence in numerous Afghan cities and the resulting number of civilian casualties.

Regarding the improvement in security, we welcome the Afghan Government’s four-year security sector reform plan, in the hope that it will strengthen the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. However, military success is only a means to an end, which is to achieve peace.

We are deeply convinced that an inclusive, Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process is the only viable long-term solution to ending the conflict. We hope that the Kabul Process brings much needed progress, but we would like to underline the importance of the negotiations being inclusive.

On 1 January 2015, NATO launched the Resolute Support Mission, a non-combat mission whose purpose is to help Afghan security forces and institutions develop the capabilities they need to defend Afghanistan and protect its citizens in a sustainable manner. In other words, its aim is to create conditions for the country's future successful development. Poland has been engaged in the Resolute Support Mission since its inception and has continued to increase its contribution. We are also proud to have participated in the operations of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), starting in 2002. The Polish military contingent in ISAF was one of its biggest and most successful. I would like to emphasize that our military efforts have always been complemented by our development assistance to Afghanistan, mostly through contributions to the multilateral assistance mechanisms of the United Nations system and the World Bank.

Another serious threat to the security of the wider region as well as Afghanistan is narcotics production. Despite the Afghan Government's efforts, drugs remain one of the largest sources of terrorists' income. It is therefore crucial to identify and coordinate both international and regional efforts to tackle that problem. We would like to thank the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA), the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia (UNRCCA) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for their hard work in addressing the issue of the production of narcotics, and we invite other regional organizations to coordinate their endeavours with them. At this point, I would like to emphasize support for UNRCCA's multidimensional approach to regional security in Afghanistan and Central Asia, including in the areas of transport, environment, food and energy security, and its focus on new threats to peace and security. Poland also greatly appreciates the work of UNAMA and the comprehensive support it provides to Afghanistan and its people.

Together with our partners in the European Union (EU), we have identified four priority areas that are critical to achieving progress in Afghanistan. They include promoting peace, stability and regional security, reinforcing democracy, the rule of law and human rights, promoting good governance and women's empowerment, and supporting economic and human development and addressing challenges related to migration. Those priorities are the pillars of the new EU strategy on Afghanistan and show our engagement and commitment to the country. We hope that the Afghan Government will work with us to implement that vital strategy.

In conclusion, I would like to underline that Poland has been a long-term partner of Afghanistan and the region. We remain committed to further strengthening peace, stability and the development of Afghanistan and Central Asia, and we are taking action to that end.