

Madam President,

Excellences, Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to address the debate of the Security Council on UNAMA. Let me assure you of my delegation's support for your leadership in our deliberations.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report and the Special Representative for his briefing. I believe it is an appropriate moment to appreciate the work to H.E. Zahir Tanin for his relentless diplomatic effort and wisdom in many areas contributing to better understanding and stability.

Slovakia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the EU. In my national capacity allow me very shortly to make a few comments on some important elements of a current situation in Afghanistan with regard to the forthcoming challenges.

Overall security remains the most important precondition for continued development in Afghanistan – political, economic or cultural. The Slovak Republic in this regard strongly condemns not only the attack on a restaurant in Kabul on 17 January, which took many lives, including of four members of the United Nations family in Afghanistan, but all use of force and violence in any form. Once again, I would like to express my condolences to the families of all victims as well as my appreciation for the work of UNAMA's staff.

I wish to reiterate the long-term commitment of the Slovak Republic in terms of providing assistance and training to the Afghan security forces. I would also like to encourage ANSF to continue in their transition in, what the Secretary General described in his report as, a “greater operational tempo”, despite targeted attacks by anti-Government elements on Afghan forces.

Prevention and management of security challenges will be crucial especially ahead of, and during Afghanistan's national elections next month. In this regard, we fully support the calls of the Special Representative, Mr. Kubiš, on Afghan authorities and independent electoral bodies to ensure that the polls are credible, that any concerns are voiced before and that transparency level is as high as possible.

We would like to appreciate the efforts of Afghan authorities with regard to the preparations for the upcoming elections, which remain on track for the scheduled polling date of 5 April. We hope that in the run up to the elections, all candidates and election workers will be able to perform their duties without being threatened by those, who aim at disrupting the firm will of the Afghan people to live peacefully in their country and choose their own destiny and political leaders. The right of all Afghans to enjoy freedom and basic human rights, privileges and responsibilities should be protected and fought for.

We are pleased by an increasing participation of women in the process of transition. The ongoing Commission on the Status of Women, during its 58th Session, has been enriched by a number of side events. Out of these I would like to point out the one organized by my colleague, Ambassador Jarmo Viinanen, Permanent Representative of Finland to the UN, on March 12, 2014.

We had an opportunity to welcome politically active Afghan women, led by the Afghan Deputy Minister for Women's Affairs, Her Excellency Mrs. Fawzia Habibi. For those, who cast doubt on progress achieved in Afghanistan, such a workshop on security and the role of women with active participation of Afghan prominent representatives in New York, would be unthinkable 13 years ago. Let me also appreciate the fact, that the Ministry of Interior of Afghanistan continues to take steps to better protect and empower female police and female Ministry staff in fulfilment of its goal of recruiting and training a total of 10,000 female officers.

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The above mentioned progress was to a great part achieved with an assistance, performance and outreach of the UNAMA mission. We took note and highly appreciate both - internal activities in assisting Afghan authorities in transition, but also the regional outreach of UNAMA. It proves that the mission is paying the necessary attention to promoting fruitful collaboration of all countries of the region facing threats that surpass their individual capacities. This approach is important especially in fighting against terrorism, cross-border trafficking and illegal trading. The Slovak Republic therefore welcomes the unanimous renewal of UNAMA mandate.

Let me also express my congratulations to the people of Afghanistan on the occasion of the forthcoming Nowruz holiday.

Thank you for your attention.