New strategy for Afghanistan

2009/2217(INI) - 22/03/2010

The Council discussed developments in Afghanistan and EU efforts on the ground on the basis of the EU's 2009 Action Plan for Enhanced Engagement in Afghanistan and Pakistan in the presence of the EU's new single representative for Afghanistan, Mr Vygaudas Usackas who takes office from 1 April 2010.

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- the appointment of Mr Usackas as both the Special Representative of the EU and Head of the EU Delegation in Kabul is a further step to strengthen coordinated EU action on the ground, working in close cooperation with other international actors. EU efforts will be spearheaded under Mr Usackas' leadership. He will guide the **implementation of the Action Plan**, in close cooperation with Member States' representatives in Kabul. The Council expressed sincere appreciation to outgoing EU Special Representative, Ettore Sequi, and outgoing Head of the EU Delegation, Hansjorg Kretschmer, for their outstanding work over the past years;
- it reiterated that the internal security situation remained a direct challenge to the stability of Afghanistan. The Council underlined its continued support for international civilian efforts in Afghanistan, emphasising the central coordination role of UNAMA and reaffirming its support for the UN mandate and the objectives of ISAF. The key to delivering the civilian efforts will be enhanced coordination and the development of a coherent approach between all major civilian actors, notably the EU Special Representative, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General and the NATO Senior Civilian Representative, under the leadership of the Government of Afghanistan. The Council underlined the **importance of Afghan ownership and leadership**;
- it emphasised its support for the outcomes of the **London Conference of 28 January 2010** and reiterated that all efforts must now focus on implementing the commitments made there, including with regards to the announced Peace and Reintegration Trust Fund to finance the Afghan-led Peace and Reintegration Programme. The Council underlined the significance of balanced, Afghan-led reconciliation and reintegration processes as key elements of a sustainable political solution in Afghanistan. In this respect, it welcomed the organisation of a Peace Jirga, scheduled to take place this Spring. It also welcomed recent contacts between leaders in the region aimed at confidence building. It looks forward to a second successful ad hoc Summit between the EU and Pakistan on 21 April 2010;
- the Council discussed the **Kabul Conference**, which should follow up the commitments made in London. The Kabul Conference will provide an opportunity for the Afghan Government to chart the way forward, notably on anti-corruption, reinforced security, effective and impartial governance, economic and social development, human rights and improved electoral processes. The EU expects that the Government of Afghanistan will act swiftly and decisively to deliver on the promises made to its people. Through its Action Plan, the EU in cooperation with UNAMA and other international partners, continues to provide long-term assistance to Afghanistan in institution building and civilian capacity programmes, including at sub-national level. The Council expects to discuss a first report on the progress of implementation of the Action Plan next month;
- the Council stressed the importance of credible, inclusive and secure **parliamentary elections in Afghanistan** reflecting the will of the people. Recalling the recommendations of the EU Election Observation Mission to the Presidential Elections of 2009 and the commitments made at the London Conference to ensure the integrity of the elections, the Council urged the Government of Afghanistan to proceed without further delay with reforms to the electoral process to safeguard the impartiality, independence and integrity of the electoral institutions, notably the Independent Election Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission, in close cooperation with the SRSG of the UN. The Council emphasised that only structural reforms will make any support

extended to the electoral process by the international community fully effective. The Council will continue to follow closely preparations for the upcoming parliamentary elections.