



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Strasbourg, 16 November 2005
14519/05 (Presse 299)

EU-AFGHANISTAN JOINT DECLARATION

Committing to a new EU-Afghan Partnership

Strasbourg, 16 November 2005

Joint Declaration

The European Union and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan are committed to a secure, stable, free, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan as laid out in the Afghan Constitution adopted on 4 January 2004 [14 Dalwa 1383]. Both parties wish to see Afghanistan play a full and active role in the international community and are committed to building a prosperous future free from the threats of terrorism, extremism and organised crime.

P R E S S

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The European Union warmly welcomes the huge strides Afghanistan has made since the Bonn Agreement of December 2001 [Jadi 1380]. European Union institutions and Member States have played a leading role in helping Afghanistan implement its reconstruction plans, pledging a total of around €3.1 billion in aid over the period from 2002 until 2006. In that respect, both parties especially acknowledge the efforts of those Member States that have undertaken a leading co-ordinating role in the various areas of reform: developing effective parliamentary institutions; design and implementation of justice sector reform; building up the national police and border police force and driving forward counter-narcotics efforts. Member States have also made important troop commitments to international forces in Afghanistan. Three major international conferences on Afghanistan were held in Europe, with another major conference coming up in London in early 2006.

The establishment of Afghanistan's National Assembly, following the elections of 18 September 2005 [27 Sunbola 1384], marks the completion of the political transition process set out in the Bonn Agreement. In line with the commitments undertaken by the international community in the Berlin Declaration of April 1 2004, the European Union reiterates that it will continue, beyond the end of the Bonn process, to offer its support wherever possible to Afghanistan. Further significant challenges remain, including pursuing visible reconstruction efforts, building up sustainable, effective and accountable state institutions, disarming illegal armed groups, strengthening human rights and fighting international terrorism and the production and trafficking of drugs. Both parties therefore consider that Afghanistan and the international community should draw up a new compact during the forthcoming London conference to cover their continued close co-operation for the period after the completion of the Bonn process.

For their part, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the European Union hereby agree to form a new partnership. This agreement seeks to build on the success of the Bonn Agreement and to establish shared priorities for the next phase in Afghanistan's renewal. In doing so, the Government of Afghanistan reaffirms its commitment to consolidating a democratic political system, establishing responsible and accountable government institutions, strengthening the rule of law, and safeguarding human rights (including the rights of women) and the development of civil society. The Government will also look to promote economic growth and combat poverty across the country, accelerate progress towards sustainable state finances, fight corruption, and end the production and trafficking of drugs. Afghan ownership of these reforms will be key to their successful implementation. The European Union, for its part, reaffirms its commitment to helping the Government of Afghanistan achieve these objectives and will use its influence with partners in the international community to encourage continued substantial cooperation with Afghanistan.

Political and Economic Governance

The European Union and the Government of Afghanistan will work to extend the political achievements of the Bonn Agreement. The European Union will continue to help Afghanistan build strong and accountable institutions at national and provincial level free from corruption, which promote the rule of law and ensure democratic oversight, in particular through the new National Assembly and Provincial Councils. In this context, both parties welcome efforts to build up effective parliamentary institutions in Afghanistan. The European Union will continue to support Afghanistan's efforts to reform its civil service and to establish an accountable appointments system based on merit in order to achieve an effective system of public administration.

Afghanistan undertakes to build a credible, predictable and transparent legal and regulatory system which encourages inward investment and the development of a legitimate private sector open to domestic and foreign business. For its part, the European Union supports Afghanistan's efforts to develop a National Development Strategy which aims to achieve these objectives and undertakes to promote Afghanistan's economic development and strengthen bilateral economic co-operation. The European Union will share its rich experience of regional economic cooperation with Afghanistan and will extend technical assistance in this field. It will also provide an incentive for the European private sector to take advantage of the current investment and trade opportunities in Afghanistan.

Security Sector Reform and Justice Sector Reform

The European Union reaffirms its full support for Afghanistan's sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and the non-interference by others in its internal affairs, in accordance with the United Nations Charter and other principles of international law. The European Union and the Government of Afghanistan, conscious of their commitments to the peaceful resolution of disputes between States and to regional security, endorse the principles of the Good Neighbourly Relations Declaration of 22 December 2002 [1 Jadi 1383] and the various instruments building on this Declaration.

EU Member States shall continue their substantial role in supplying military and civilian resources to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force, including to Provincial Reconstruction Teams, and support the activities of the US-led Coalition Operation Enduring Freedom, to improve security, extend stability and encourage development across Afghanistan until such time as the Afghan security and armed forces are sufficiently constituted and operational. The Government of Afghanistan shall work closely with international security forces while pursuing efforts to develop its indigenous capacity to assure a safe and stable Afghanistan.

The EU and its Member States will continue to support, including with the provision of funds and expert assistance, the international effort to assist the Government of Afghanistan develop a national police and border police force. The European Union and the Government of Afghanistan believe that an impartial and effective police force is one of the key building blocks in establishing the rule of law in Afghanistan.

Similarly, the EU and its Member States will continue to support the international effort to assist the Government of Afghanistan develop the justice sector, which would result in a strong framework for the establishment of rule of law in the country. In particular, the EU will aim for increased assistance, including with the provision of funds, in support of justice sector reform. In this context the pace of reform in the justice sector shall be hastened. The European Union and Afghanistan recognise that the reform of the administration of justice will be a high priority for the Afghan Government and the international community. The Government of Afghanistan will facilitate the efforts of the international community, by ensuring more effective coordination among Afghanistan's judicial organs.

Both sides recognise that improved political and democratic governance will be built upon the development of a credible legal system which strengthens the rule of law, protects human rights and reforms the criminal and civil justice sectors in the country.

Along with development and strengthening of the national police, the European Union and the Government of Afghanistan are convinced that an independent professional judiciary and solid, impartial civil administration are crucial to the creation of a stable and peaceful environment in which the rule of law is respected.

The European Union considers an effective disarmament and reintegration process crucial to the future stability of Afghanistan and will continue to provide political and financial support to the Government of Afghanistan in this regard.

Counter Narcotics

Drug cultivation, production and trafficking continue to represent a significant threat to Afghanistan's security and development. The European Union welcomes the Government of Afghanistan's commitment to tackling the drugs trade. A sustained effort will be required across all pillars of the Government of Afghanistan's Counter Narcotics Implementation Plan if the narcotics trade is to be eliminated. The European Union welcomes the Government of Afghanistan's work to revise its National Drugs Control Strategy and to develop detailed plans of activity, including for the development of alternative livelihoods and for bringing drug traffickers to justice. The EU aims to increase assistance in support of the counter narcotics campaign through Afghan budgetary processes and welcomes the launch, in this respect, of the Counter Narcotics Trust Fund. The EU continues to support UNODC's drug control activities in support of the Afghan Plan. For its part, the Government of Afghanistan will work to develop effective institutions at both the central and the provincial level in order to ensure that international assistance is targeted where it is most required. To share lessons learned, the European Union and Afghanistan shall regularly review their cooperation in this field.

The European Union and the Government of Afghanistan also acknowledge the importance of the Paris Pact initiative in order to fully develop national capacities and increase regular cooperation between Afghanistan, its neighbours and the international donor community.

Development

The European Union and Afghanistan will continue working together for the reduction of poverty and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in Afghanistan. Both sides have a shared interest in ensuring that the government's recurrent budget is fully covered by state revenues as soon as possible, so that international assistance can be used for sustainable poverty reduction and for investment in long-term economic and social development, which is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.

The EU recognises the leadership role which must be played by the Afghan government in promoting economic and social development, including the development of poverty reduction strategies, and in state-building, and will support its efforts in this regard by making available an appropriate level of aid from the European Union budget over the next seven-year period from 2006 to 2013 in support of Afghanistan's National Development Strategy, with the aim of improving predictability of the resources available, subject to progress on agreed reforms. The EU and the Government of Afghanistan aim to improve the co-ordination of international cooperation.

Human Rights, Civil Society and Refugee Return

The Government of Afghanistan is committed to safeguarding freedoms under the Constitution, to developing a pluralistic and democratic society, and ensuring respect for human rights. It pledges to reflect the aspirations of Afghanistan's nascent civil society and to promote in particular the participation of women with special emphasis on their access to health and education, their rightful place in Afghan public life, as well as the need to protect them from oppression and violence. It also reaffirms its commitment to the equal rights of all its citizens and to respect disadvantaged sectors of society such as children, the disabled, detainees and returnees. The Afghan Government supports the recommendations of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and shall implement a process of transitional justice to address human rights violations of the past. The European Union shares these objectives and shall continue to provide assistance to ensure their success. It will also continue to support the development of professional and independent news media in Afghanistan.

Since the fall of the Taliban regime millions of Afghan refugees have been able to return to their home and rebuild their lives. Many have returned home with valuable skills and experience enabling them to play an important role in the reconstruction process. The European Union and the Government of Afghanistan share a common commitment to facilitating the process of voluntary return of refugees, working in close cooperation with states in the region, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other international partners. This includes cooperation on programmes supporting the repatriation of Afghan nationals from the European Union, and facilitating the right conditions inside Afghanistan for voluntary return of refugees. Moreover the European Union will work with the Government of Afghanistan and neighbouring states in assisting in the integration of returning refugees throughout Afghanistan, including the border regions.

Education and Culture

The European Union and Afghanistan recognise the central value of primary, secondary and higher education for the development of the country and welcome the existing efforts of several Member States in this field. Both sides will work to expand the capacity of the higher education sector and research institutions in Afghanistan, by developing links between European and Afghan institutions, providing scholarships and through language support.

The European Union and Afghanistan will promote cultural dialogue in sectors which reflect cultural identity, as well as cultural and linguistic diversity, and support the ratification of the UNESCO Convention of Cultural Diversity.

Regular Political Dialogue

To strengthen bilateral cooperation and examine progress in meeting mutual commitments, the political dialogue between Afghanistan and the European Union shall be formalised and shall involve annual meetings at Ministerial level.

Done at Strasbourg on the sixteenth day of November in the year two thousand and five.

For the European Union

For the Government of the
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan