**Security Council**

**Debate on Afghanistan**

**21 December 2015**

**Statement**

Madame President,

We thank the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General in Afghanistan and head of UNAMA, Mr. Nicholas Haysom for presenting the Secretary Generals report on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

This debate offers, once again, an opportunity to review the unfolding political, security, humanitarian and human rights situation in the country.

It is with great concern that we noted, during the reported period increased instability and a worsening security situation, with attacks by the Taliban being reported throughout the country and the growing presence of ISIL.

The decrease of international military support, that Afghanistan enjoyed in the past decade, has put a heavy toll on the Afghan Security Forces which, according to the report, withstood the mounting pressures, being able to retake areas fallen to Taliban control.

The commitment of Afghanistan allies to continue assisting the Afghan security forces in ensuring security and stability in the country, is the expression of the importance in keeping steadfast to Afghanistan, in crucial and dangerous times for the entire international community.

Events such as the capture of Kunduz, however recovered a few days later with the support of the American troops, reinforced the perception on this group dangerousness for the institutions in place, and on its ability to continue destabilizing Afghanistan.

While regretting people´s deaths and the destruction of the Doctors Without Borders Hospital, in Kunduz, by the 3rd of October bombing, and acknowledging that most probably the incident was due to a human error, we look forward at the investigation results to establish the facts on this unfortunate event.

However, beyond this incident, the Afghan people continues paying an intolerable prize, in loss of lives and violations of their human rights, caught in crossfire, victim of indiscriminate attacks and targeted killings. The millions of Afghan refugees in Pakistan, Iran, their large number in the current wave of refugees towards Europe, and the very slow pace of returns cleary demonstrates the sad plight of the Afghans and their lack of confidence in the future;

Madame President,

After some hopeful signals that a peace process was on the brink of being launched we see, with disappointment, the impasse in a possible political solution to the conflict.

We took note of the statement by the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Shawaz Sharif, during his recent visit to Washington DC, on preparations to facilitate negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan government.

This is a positive sign of how countries of the region can engage in the pursuit of solutions for peace in Afghanistan, as well as the readiness of other members of the international community to support an Afghan-led peace process.

Local initiatives in peace building efforts, by national actors, with a view of promoting stability, such as the local cease-fire agreement, reached in September, covering regions of Baghlan Province, reinforces the idea that it is possible, through dialogue between the Taliban and the Government, to come to a peaceful solution of the conflict. We extend our encouragement to UNAMA in support of such initiatives.

Mr. President,

The acknowledgement of the 2015 report “Afghanistan Opium Survey”, according to which the area of opium poppy cultivation decreased by 19 percent in 2015, compared to 2014, is a welcome development. The reduction of the illegal drugs economy and this curse of which Afghanistan is so heavily dependent is a key development for the country´s normality.

Therefore, we support and encourage the National Drug Action Plan, focused on alternative sustainable development, such as agriculture, poppy eradication and drug interdiction, fight against money laundering, regional and international cooperation.

The success of this plan is the more important as a cornerstone in the fight against the financing of terrorist groups such as Al-Qaida, ISIL and their affiliates.

Madame President,

We support the renewal of UNAMA’s mandate. The new elements added therein reflect, with more precision, the dynamics of the conflict in Afghanistan as well as strengthening the work of the Sanctions Committee 1988 (2011).

In conclusion, Madame President, in spite of notable progress achieved by the Afghan people in the last few years, the challenges facing the country are immense.

The Afghans still have to achieve new levels of cooperation and understanding, permitting the country to overcome it is present and bloody past.

Besides, we must stress the international community commitment with Afghanistan, and the need to keep steadfast in assisting the country, how high the prize, to establish the basis for a better and more prosperous future.

Thank you Madame President