

**Opening remarks by the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan,
Tadamichi Yamamoto, at the Third Development Senior Officials Meeting****Kabul, Afghanistan, 5 October 2017***[as delivered]*

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Thank you very much Minister Hakimi. I must say I heard your remarks with real appreciation. Mr. Co-chair, Ministers, Senior Officials, Excellencies, colleagues and friends,

I would like to begin by expressing appreciation for the insights and the wisdom of President Ghani and the National Unity Government leadership. We are deeply honoured that they joined us to open today's gathering. President Ghani has laid out an insightful analysis and a compelling vision. His remarks remind us that this meeting is an important part of a large picture.

When Afghanistan and the international community committed to a Transformation Decade, we committed to working jointly to advance security, democracy, and self-reliance for this country, all in the service of our search for enduring peace. It is well recognized that security and development go hand in hand, based on a solid foundation of the recognition of human rights.

Our particular focus today, and in the informative side events the Government held yesterday, is the development and reform agenda. I would like to thank my Co-Chair Minister Hakini for his progress report on that agenda, which I thought was really very impressive; particularly on women's empowerment. And I congratulate all of the Government colleagues whose leadership, commitment, and dedicated effort contributed to the achievements Minister Hakimi outlined.

Together, we are focused on a shared and fundamental goal: supporting the Afghan people to live with dignity, with well-being, and with prospects for their future. I very much appreciated the wise remarks of Her Excellency Rula Ghani, yesterday. The First Lady showed us that empowering individuals, empowers all of Afghanistan to contribute to a better future, and to share in its prospects.

One year ago, in Brussels, the Government presented the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework to partners from around the world. The ANPDF is a comprehensive plan. International partners responded to its vision with extraordinary commitments of support. Not only financial support, but the political commitment to continue in this joint, and challenging, effort.

We continue to be guided by the ANPDF, and its commitment to engaging all parts of the Afghan state in building social capital, in educating and caring for the health needs of Afghans, in creating jobs, in promoting social inclusion, and above all in reducing poverty. In this process, we must not lose sight of the needs of the most vulnerable in the Afghan population, including those for whom even small amounts of assistance can make a vast, visible difference.



Real change is complex. And it is not easy. At times, both the international community and the Government, have, out of deep aspiration to improve the lives of the people, perhaps been too ambitious or too impatient. But together, we can do a great deal.

In the events yesterday, and in the panel discussions today, we focus on essential building blocks for Afghanistan's future. How do we energise the economy to create prosperity for all Afghans? How do we encourage women to play a key role in that prosperity, and to benefit from it for themselves and for their families? How do we build the infrastructure that is needed to make Afghan communities whole, to make the economy function better, and to connect people with their neighbours in this country and throughout the region? What can we do to support the energy and industry of Afghanistan's traders and its businessmen? And how do we ensure that the institutions of the Afghan government are democratic, transparent, and serving the needs of all Afghans?

Achieving real change requires honesty. We must look candidly at what is working, and what is not. On behalf of the international community, I want to thank our partners in Government, in civil society, and in the business community for their willingness to have the type of thoughtful, well-considered, exchanges we witnessed yesterday with all of the visitors in this room. I look forward to continuing our discussions today.

Taking a moment to speak on behalf of the United Nations, I also appreciate the frank exchanges we have had with the President and his team, and I affirm our commitment to continuously advancing our efforts to deliver as one UN, in line with the development aspirations so vividly put forward in the ANPDF. Working as one UN comes also at this Government's request and is the expectation of Secretary-General Guterres himself.

There are serious challenges across the development agenda. All of us understand that. But we are seeing that there are also genuine accomplishments. Some have been the product of recent efforts. Some represent the fruits of years of intensive work. I am particularly encouraged by the momentum taking root in the field of anti-corruption. In this respect, I wish to commend both the efforts of Government leaders and the work of every day officials, civil society activists, business leaders, and youth, who often risk their own safety to take a meaningful stand.

Change requires this type of involvement. It must engage communities and it must include the people who live in them. Governors and mayors from around the country are here. We very much welcome their participation. I particularly look forward to your insights. They are critical to helping us understand what makes a difference to your communities. And as we look ahead to parliamentary elections, we prepare for a fundamental political exercise that gives voice to individual and community preferences. There is no better way to understand the aspirations of the people. The credibility of the electoral process shall be vital and the UN, in collaboration with the Independent Electoral Commission, and all partners is committed to helping ensure that elections – both parliamentary and presidential – take place to the highest possible standard in what remain quite challenging circumstances.

The ultimate aspiration of all Afghan people is to live in peace. Violence poses extraordinary cost – in the loss of life that disproportionately affects women and children, in the destruction of property, and in the obstruction of progress towards Afghans' rightful future. I am encouraged to see renewed interest and efforts towards peace. Recent policy announcements by key countries including the United States, proactive efforts by China and



engagement of Afghanistan's neighbours, including regional neighbours in Central Asian countries, have opened political space for the efforts towards both peace and a brighter future.

We know, of course, that sustaining peace requires more than political agreement. In the ANPDF, the Government links development progress to Afghans' right, their demand, to live in a country that is at peace and on the road to self-reliance. I ask all of the partners, activists, business men and women, and officials here to consider each element of our work through the lens of its contribution to peace.

If we can do that, we can contribute to the future that Afghans envision, and with which all of us in the international community wish to see Afghanistan succeed. Today we will discuss what has been achieved in support of that goal. But we will also discuss our challenges. Over the next year, let us continue tackling those challenges together, so that the 2018 ministerial meeting will be an opportunity to consolidate progress towards Afghanistan's future.

Thank you very much.

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