

Council conclusions on Afghanistan

1. The European Union stands firm in its commitment to Afghanistan and its people in this critical phase. The past months have seen a serious security situation, renewed terrorist attacks with record numbers of civilian casualties, and the concomitant internal displacement and exodus of thousands of Afghans, putting mounting pressure on the region and the European Union.
2. It is all the more urgent that the Government of Afghanistan and all partners in the region engage credibly to end conflict and ensure a stable environment. An Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process remains the prerequisite to any sustainable solution, which must retain major achievements including the respect for human rights and especially the rights of women. The EU condemns the recent Taliban attacks in Kunduz and the casualties inflicted on the civilian population and the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. They are a reminder of what is at stake: Afghanistan's stability, development and the progress made over many years.
3. The Council deplores the loss of life following the air strike on the hospital of Médecins Sans Frontières. It awaits the results of the different inquiries launched. The Council stresses how vital it is for all parties to comply with international humanitarian law and principles and to protect and respect medical and humanitarian facilities, aid agencies and their personnel.
4. The EU will continue to help address the root causes of migration, such as poverty, violations of human rights and instability, so as to reduce the incentives for irregular migration and to combat trafficking networks. The Council encourages efforts on reintegrating refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons, who are important for the development of the Afghan society.
5. It is crucial that the Afghan people can regain confidence in the future. The ambitious reform agenda outlined by President Ghani at the London conference 2014 and the "Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework" (SMAF) as presented at the Senior Officials Meeting in Kabul on 5 September 2015 are evidence of the National Unity Government's commitment to change and credible reform. In line with the EU strategy 2014-16, the EU strongly supports the National Unity Government's reforms on which further tangible progress is urgently needed.
6. Implementing the 'Self Reliance' reform agenda for economic growth, macro-economic stability, good governance and poverty reduction requires determined action by the National Unity Government as well as continued high levels of support by the international community, based on mutual accountability. Strong Afghan leadership in the reform process and the reinforced efforts to deliver services to its citizens will allow donors to substantially align their support with the Government's vision. Stable and inclusive democratic governance, including the reform of the electoral system and its institutions, progress on the rule of law, tackling the underlying drivers of corruption, and the promotion of human rights, in particular the rights of women and children, are key factors for both the Afghan Government and the international community.
7. The Council welcomes the decision to accept the invitation by the Government of Afghanistan to co-host the next comprehensive Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan in Brussels in 2016. Afghanistan will need the ongoing commitment of the international community at or near current levels to continue on the path to sustainability. The Ministerial Conference will set out the framework for the Government of Afghanistan and donors until 2020, contributing to a stable and reliable environment for Afghanistan to move progressively towards self-reliance. Concrete commitments and delivery by the Government of Afghanistan and the international community alike should underpin the Brussels Conference. The Council invites the HR and the Commission to pursue the preparations of the Brussels Conference jointly with the Government of Afghanistan and in close consultation with international partners and actors in the region.