

Progress report on Afghanistan

for the information of the German Bundestag

July 2011 interim report

Introduction and summary

*The purpose of the Federal Government progress reports on the situation in Afghanistan is to provide information to the **German Bundestag**. The ministries involved in Afghanistan – primarily the Federal Foreign Office, the Federal Ministry of the Interior, the Federal Ministry of Defence and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development – prepare these reports jointly under the aegis of Ambassador Michael Steiner, the Federal Government's Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan.*

*In the first progress report in December 2010, the Federal Government **took stock and determined the course** of Germany's engagement in Afghanistan. The strategy set forth in the report and the actions of German civilian and military stakeholders have since contributed to thoroughly positive developments in and prospects for Afghanistan, painful attacks and losses notwithstanding.*

*This brief **interim** report outlines the current situation in Afghanistan and looks ahead to emerging developments and upcoming events. It is divided into the three key spheres of international engagement in Afghanistan: security, governance and development.*

The Federal Government will next update the German Bundestag on the situation in Afghanistan in December 2011.

The international mission in Afghanistan has entered a new phase in 2011. With the start of the transition in July 2011, the Afghan Government will gradually take over responsibility for security throughout the country, as has been agreed with the international community. This serves President Karzai's stated goal for Afghanistan to attain the full exercise of sovereignty by the end of 2014. By this time, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is to have largely completed its mission of helping build up the Afghan state.

ISAF troop levels will thus be reduced gradually from 2011 to 2014. By the end of 2014, there are to be no international combat forces¹ remaining in Afghanistan. The prospect for withdrawal is becoming concrete. As announced in 2009², the USA will scale back the troop surge begun in 2009 and will withdraw a total of 33,000 US soldiers from Afghanistan by

¹ After 2014 the only military forces operating in Afghanistan should be those who serve primarily to train Afghan security forces and to protect their own forces. The term "combat forces", which is used in debate, thus refers not to the type of troops but rather to their task.

² Address by US President Obama at West Point, 1 December 2009.

summer 2012. A total of approximately 68,000 US soldiers will then remain in Afghanistan.³ As for German participation in ISAF, the Federal Government is confident that it will be able to reduce the Bundeswehr presence in Afghanistan beginning at the end of 2011. In doing so, the full scope of what is responsible in terms of security policy will be used – to the extent that the current situation allows for this and that neither our troops nor the sustainability of the transition process are jeopardized.

The international community has a strategy and a timeframe for its engagement in Afghanistan. The German Government has played an active role in shaping this. Germany makes a recognized and substantial contribution to the stabilization of the country and its region – militarily as the third-largest provider of troops, civilly as the third-largest donor and politically through NATO, the European Union, the United Nations Security Council and the International Contact Group on Afghanistan. The successful military operation in Pakistan against Osama bin Laden, the mastermind of the attacks of 11 September 2001, has further weakened the al-Qaida terror network. The provision of long-term security in the region – including the safeguarding and consolidation of what has been achieved thus far in the economic and social realms – remains, however, our goal. In light of new events, we must continually review what resources to deploy in implementing our Afghanistan strategy and what risks to assume in doing so. To that extent the strategy and timeframe remain correct, although the parameters could be adjusted.

A key element of this strategy is the increasing significance of the political process. However necessary an international security presence in Afghanistan remains for the time being, ultimately only a political solution will be able to manage the underlying conflicts in the country and the region. The bolstering of military, civilian and political efforts since 2009 has fulfilled the necessary preconditions for such a solution. The political process was introduced in Afghanistan in 2010 with a national peace assembly and the appointment of a High Peace Council. President Karzai was given the mandate of also holding talks with those who have engaged in armed insurrection against his government, against the Afghan people and against the international presence in Afghanistan. The international community supports this process. Ultimately, however, there are three basic principles that all negotiating partners must uphold: they must renounce violence, they must sever all ties with international terrorism and they must recognize the Afghan constitutional framework. This process of reconciliation also requires the constructive support of neighbouring countries.

An international Afghanistan Conference in Bonn will look to the future. According to the current state of preparations, the conference will address civilian aspects of the transitional phase until 2014, long-term international engagement beginning in 2015, and the political process of reconciliation and conflict resolution both within Afghanistan and regionally. In keeping with the wishes of the Afghan President, the German Government will hold this conference on 5 December 2011, exactly ten years after the first Afghanistan Conference in 2001 on the Petersberg near Bonn. Afghanistan will chair the conference. Through a worldwide demarche effort, the Afghan Government and the German Government have jointly

³ Televised speech on Afghanistan by US President Obama, 22 June 2011.

informed the roughly 90 invited countries about the topics and goals of the conference. The conference is being prepared jointly with the Afghan Government in the International Contact Group on Afghanistan under the leadership of Ambassador Steiner, the German Government's Special Representative.

The **International Contact Group (ICG)**, in which representatives of nearly 50 countries and international organizations participate, including approximately 15 Muslim-majority countries, serves to strengthen the international strategic consensus on Afghanistan. At its most recent meeting on 27 June 2011, which quite intentionally took place in Kabul, the ICG reaffirmed the international timeframe consisting of the transition process from 2011 to 2014 followed by the long-term engagement of the international community. Both of these processes will be set out in more precise terms at the conference in Bonn. The region surrounding Afghanistan will also play a crucial role both in securing the internal Afghan process of reconciliation and in the economic development of Afghanistan within its region. Afghanistan's neighbours are also represented in the Contact Group. The ICG has once again emphasized the importance of an Afghan-led process of political reconciliation. In view of the knowledge that a lasting political solution must include all social and ethnic groups, the Afghan Government and the ICG have agreed to shape this process in an inclusive manner. Accordingly, the Afghan Government will be represented in Bonn by an inclusive delegation.

Afghanistan will also need international and German support after 2014. This will increasingly shift to a long-term development task, even as elements of security policy continue to play a role. In keeping with this, the Federal Government plans to adjust its Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan beginning in 2012 and place them under exclusively civilian leadership in order to make clear the shift in focus from military to civilian tasks.