



AUSTRALIA



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

E-mail australia@un.int

150 East 42nd Street, New York NY 10017-5612 Ph 212 - 351 6600 Fax 212 - 351 6610 www.australia-unsc.gov.au

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

21 December 2017

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)

**Statement by Mr David Yardley
Counsellor (Political) at the Permanent Mission of Australia
to the United Nations**

As delivered

Thank you to Special Representative Yamamoto and all the briefers today for their valuable remarks.

Australia congratulates Afghanistan for overcoming significant security, political and humanitarian challenges in 2017 and notes the progress made on key reforms – particularly on anti-corruption and in the security sector. We encourage sustained attention on the challenges of the security environment, establishing a credible peace process and the response to continuing high levels of internal displacement.

We welcome the Afghan Parliament's recent confirmation of 11 ministerial nominees to bring more certainty to domestic politics, but were discouraged by the failure to gain confirmation for the single female nominee. Conducting parliamentary elections in 2018 will be crucial for political credibility. We encourage Afghanistan to continue to work toward timely, free and fair elections and welcome the UN's commitment to providing electoral support.

The worrying trend of increased drug production identified in the recent UNODC report will also require increased attention to avoid undermining security and development gains.

While the security and political phases of transition are important, it is essential that Afghanistan's economic transition is not neglected – it is critical for long-term stability. We are encouraged by growing regional economic cooperation which has seen Afghanistan build closer trade partnerships with its neighbours through 2017.

We look forward to the Kabul Process meeting in February 2018 as a means of continuing to draw together different peace initiatives into a coherent and comprehensive Afghan-owned and led peace process. We would also welcome enhanced engagement between Afghanistan and Pakistan and urge priority be given to strengthening this bilateral relationship – it is vital for regional stability.

Australia continues to work with partners in support of the international response to Afghanistan's challenges. We welcomed renewed international commitments to Afghanistan in 2017, including the US and EU strategies on Afghanistan and the bolstered commitment of NATO and its partners. Australia also contributed to this effort, modestly increasing our military contribution to the Resolute Support mission during 2017.

2017 has been a year of reflection and realignment for the international community's approach in Afghanistan. We urge full implementation of the recommendations of the UNAMA Strategic Review and inclusions flowing from these in UNAMA's renewed mandate – especially initiatives which address gender issues.

Australia appreciates the significant contribution of UN agencies and their staff in Afghanistan and we would like to thank them for their close cooperation as development and diplomatic partners throughout 2017. As we move into 2018, we look forward to a refreshed approach. We have a window of opportunity to use the momentum of 2017 and see further tangible progress for Afghanistan.