

Procedure file

Basic information	
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2007/2208(INI)
Stabilisation of Afghanistan: challenges for the EU and the international community	
Subject	
6.10.04 Third-country political situation, local and regional conflicts	
6.10.05 Peace preservation, humanitarian and rescue tasks, crisis management	
6.40.04.06 Relations with central Asian countries	
Geographical area	
Afghanistan	

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	AFET Foreign Affairs		
European Parliament	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	DEVE Development (Associated committee)		03/10/2007
		PPE-DE SCHRÖDER Jürgen	
Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	General Affairs	2870	26/05/2008
	General Affairs	2864	29/04/2008
	General Affairs	2839	10/12/2007
European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	External Relations	FERRERO-WALDNER Benita	

Key events			
27/09/2007	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
27/09/2007	Referral to associated committees announced in Parliament		
10/12/2007	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		Summary
29/04/2008	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		
26/05/2008	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		
24/06/2008	Vote in committee		Summary

27/06/2008	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0269/2008	
08/07/2008	Results of vote in Parliament		
08/07/2008	Debate in Parliament		
08/07/2008	Decision by Parliament	T6-0337/2008	Summary
08/07/2008	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2007/2208(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFET/6/53530

Documentation gateway

Committee draft report		PE400.634	05/02/2008	EP	
Committee opinion	DEVE	PE400.348	10/03/2008	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE404.588	14/05/2008	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0269/2008	27/06/2008	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0337/2008	08/07/2008	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2008)4891	27/08/2008	EC	
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2008)5307/3	29/09/2008	EC	

Stabilisation of Afghanistan: challenges for the EU and the international community

The Council adopted the following conclusions on the situation in Afghanistan:

- Firstly, the Council reaffirms the EU's commitment to long-term support for the people and government of Afghanistan. The core principles of EU engagement remain unchanged: promoting Afghan leadership, responsibility and ownership, and fostering the development of a democratic, secure and sustainable Afghan State;
- The Council welcomes the progress made in 2007. Afghanistan is experiencing significant economic growth. The media are generally free and robust. Health and Education have undergone important advances. Relations with neighbouring states, notably Pakistan, have shown signs of improvement. The Council also welcomes the various initiatives to outreach, engaging with disaffected Afghans and offering them a return to society provided they renounce violence and are not part of any terrorist network;
- Security remains a very direct challenge to stability in Afghanistan. The EU fully supports the work done by ISAF (International Security Assistance Force ? led by NATO) in providing a safe environment for reconstruction and development and assisting the Afghan Government in countering the insurgency and violent opponents of a peaceful and democratic Afghanistan. However, Afghanistan still faces serious challenges, particularly regarding governance, rule of law, corruption, and narcotics. The EU and its member states will further support the Afghan Government in its effort to meet these challenges;
- The Afghanistan Compact and the Joint Declaration Committing to a New EU-Afghan Partnership remain a comprehensive framework for EU engagement with Afghanistan. The Council notes the mutual commitments made within this framework, and encourages all parties to meet them;
- The EU's cross-cutting priority remains the promotion of human rights, paying special attention to women's and children's rights. Execution of death penalties, the conditions for imprisoned children and women and alleged use of torture are recent examples of concern. The Council would like to make an urgent appeal to halt any possible further executions and to reconsider the ending of the de facto moratorium on the execution of the death penalty.
- The Council calls upon the Government of Afghanistan to further improve national and local governance. Substantive reform and major improvements in governance are needed urgently, both centrally and locally;

- The Council reaffirms its support for the Government of Afghanistan's efforts to promote and extend the rule of law through development of the police, courts, prisons and the wider justice system to the regional and provincial level;
- The Council is determined to contribute significantly to police reform through the EU police mission. EUPOL is now deploying across the country and should reach full complement of 195 by Spring 2008. The Council recognises the considerable challenges involved in ensuring that EUPOL reaches its full potential, and will give the mission all necessary backing to overcome them. The deployment of EUPOL represents an increase in EU efforts in Afghanistan. This underlines the need to place all EU efforts within an integrated and comprehensive approach. The EU reiterates its support to the central role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in coordinating donors' civilian efforts. Moreover, promoting the UN's outreach to all provinces is essential to support development and enhance coordination. The EU will promote greater donor coherence, including improved coordination between the military and civilian international engagement in Afghanistan;
- The Council notes that success in combating drugs production and trade is vital to the stability of the country as a whole. The Council recognises the links between the illicit drugs business and the insurgency. A coherent implementation of the Afghan National Drug Control Strategy is of the utmost urgency;
- The Council recognises the importance of a strong commitment by neighbouring and regional partners to the stabilisation of Afghanistan, and favours advancing regional cooperation as an effective way to promote security, governance and development in Afghanistan;
- The Council will regularly review the implementation of EU policy towards Afghanistan.

Stabilisation of Afghanistan: challenges for the EU and the international community

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own initiative report by André BRIE (GUE/NGL, DE) on Stabilisation of Afghanistan: challenges for the EU and the international community.

Above all, MEPs take the view that, as a result of the last 30 years of Soviet occupation, the fighting between various Mujahideen factions and repression under the Taliban regime, Afghanistan has started an important and complicated reconstruction process. They welcome the efforts and progress made since 2002 by the Afghan people, although the country must make considerable efforts to put an end to the vicious circle of poverty and violence. In this context, MEPs call on the Commission to bring forward an initiative for an international council comprising the main donors and UN organisations, in order to harmonise the different reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan.

To rebuild a durably stable and democratic Afghanistan, MEPs consider it necessary to mobilise the whole population and civil society at the different stages of the country's reconstruction, including during elections. It is also essential to combat corruption, drug trafficking and violence, which undermines the development of Afghan society as a whole.

The EU, a political and humanitarian organisation: MEPs note that in Afghanistan the EU is primarily known as a humanitarian organisation. According to MEPs, the EU must have a stronger political influence, by strengthening its visibility at local level. As for the international community, it must better coordinate its efforts to provide efficient and sustainable civilian aid. A balanced budget allocating sufficient funds for civil reconstruction and humanitarian assistance is therefore essential. Measures are also necessary in terms of security, by providing Afghanistan with additional combat troops in the most difficult areas. In this regard, MEPs stress that the US operation 'Enduring Freedom' could be perceived as counterproductive if the military pressure on the insurgents is not matched by a strengthened political process through which the Afghan authorities reach out to all segments of the population.

Strengthen security: efforts must be made to strengthen the fight against local and international terrorism, religious extremism, ethnic extremism, ethnic separatism and all actions aimed at subverting the territorial integrity and state unity of Afghanistan. Recall that Afghanistan's security problems are more complex than just a war on terror and they therefore require more than a military solution. According to MEPs, security and the rule of law are interdependent, and strengthening the rule of law is necessary in order to enable the country's citizens to make healthy economic and social choices. MEPs also stress the urgent need to develop a balanced and sustainable approach to security sector reform, providing for a professional national army and police force. However, it is worth noting that the overall outcome of police reform efforts during the past five years has been disappointing. Therefore, the international community and the EU police mission (EUPOL) must continue their efforts to develop Afghanistan's own police force, characterised by respect for human rights and the rule of law. In this context, the EU must increase considerably the resources envisaged for EUPOL, in terms of both personnel and financing (in particular, MEPs regret the fact that the EUPOL mission has yet to reach full strength). MEPs also call for a strengthening of the reform of the legal system, in the context of the programme of assistance for Afghanistan, with the aim of professionalising the Afghan judiciary.

Security and development: according to MEPs, provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) should concentrate on specific objectives related to security, training and working with the Afghan police and military, and supporting the reach of the central government into insecure areas. There is an urgent need to develop and strengthen the nascent civil society in Afghanistan, in order to develop a broad awareness of the importance of human rights and gender equality as well as the protection of minorities. In order to overcome the culture of violence prevailing in Afghan society, the international donor community should lend financial and technical support to local projects aimed at reconciliation.

Strengthen freedom of expression: all efforts must be made to ensure freedom of the media and the press. In this context, MEPs express their concern about President Karzai's refusal to sign the draft media law. They therefore call on the Afghan Government to undertake to guarantee effective freedom of speech for all its citizens, starting with the defence of Internet freedom. They also emphasise the importance of a forward-looking mass media law that is mindful of the country's religious and cultural values without curtailing the independence of the media.

Death penalty: MEPs express their concern for the physical integrity of Ms Malalai Joya, Member of the Wolesi Jirga, and of Latif Pedram, two human rights activists under house arrest. Once again, they call on the Afghan authorities to introduce the moratorium on the death penalty as well as for fair trials for those individuals who are facing the death penalty.

Women's rights: while MEPs note the unquestionable progress made in terms of women's rights, they remain concerned about the huge income disparities between men and women, the very low literacy rate of women and the injustices induced by cultural practices suffered by women and girls. They stress the urgent need for measures aimed at protecting the rights of women as well as the need to earmark funds for them (particularly with a view to their education).

Afghan refugees: MEPs draw attention to the fact that the UNHCR has helped 3.69 million Afghan refugees to return to Afghanistan since March 2002, but that, despite these returns, approximately 3.5 million Afghans still remain in Pakistan and Iran. They are concerned about the decline in funding for Afghan refugees, and underline that maintaining a successful repatriation programme is likely to become more

expensive. According to MEPs, the safe and voluntary return of Afghan refugees and displaced persons should remain a high priority for the international community.

Trafficking of drugs and opium: MEPs express their deep concern about the ever-expanding trafficking of opium, and stress that this trafficking is a source of corruption and undermines public institutions, particularly those in the security and justice sectors. According to MEPs, the international community led by the Afghan government must develop a long-term strategy aimed primarily at comprehensive rural development to curtail poppy cultivation. Furthermore, the major social and health problems caused by drug addiction in general, and the social and economic consequences for addicted Afghan women in particular, appear to be catastrophic (according to a survey in 2005, there were 920 000 drug users in Afghanistan, of which 120 000 were women). MEPs consider that the government of Afghanistan is currently unable to enforce the anti-drug laws in the country. The international community must therefore devise appropriate programmes, activities and awareness-raising campaigns targeting addicted women and their families.

Lastly, MEPs call on the Commission to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of European Union financial assistance, in order to achieve greater transparency. They also recall the European Parliament's initiative to support democracy-building with parliaments in third countries, and resolve to make use of it for capacity-building of the Afghan Parliament.

Stabilisation of Afghanistan: challenges for the EU and the international community

The European Parliament adopted by 423 votes to 74 with 43 abstentions, a resolution on the process of Stabilisation in Afghanistan: challenges for the EU and the international community.

The report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by André BRIE (GUE/NGL, DE) on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. It should be noted that the rapporteur withdrew his name from the report as he considered that he was not be able to convince MEPs that military solutions were not viable for Afghanistan.

Above all, Parliament takes the view that, as a result of the last 30 years of Soviet occupation, the fighting between various Mujahideen factions and repression under the Taliban regime, Afghanistan has started an important and complicated reconstruction process. It welcomes the efforts and progress made since 2002 by the Afghan people, although the country must make considerable efforts to put an end to the vicious circle of poverty and violence. On violence, Parliament condemns in the strongest possible terms the terrorist attack on the Indian Embassy in Kabul on 7 July 2008 and reiterates its view that the Afghanistan-Pakistan relationship has been the source of much of the region's instability. It hopes that, with the new government in Pakistan, the improvement of the bilateral relationship will receive a fresh impetus. It believes, however, that without the active engagement and assistance of the international community, the two countries will not be able to extricate themselves from their difficult bilateral relationship. It urges the international community to initiate and support measures to lessen tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan, including a long-term programme to stabilise and develop the cross-border region involving stakeholders on both sides.

To rebuild a durably stable and democratic Afghanistan, Parliament considers it necessary to mobilise the whole population and civil society at the different stages of the country's reconstruction, including during elections. It is also essential to combat corruption, drug trafficking and violence, which undermines the development of Afghan society as a whole.

The EU, a political and humanitarian organisation: Parliament notes that in Afghanistan the EU is primarily known as a humanitarian organisation. According to the Parliament, the EU must have a stronger political influence, by strengthening its visibility at local level. As for the international community, it must better coordinate its efforts to provide efficient and sustainable civilian aid. A balanced budget allocating sufficient funds for civil reconstruction and humanitarian assistance is therefore essential. In this context, Parliament welcomes the fact that the International Conference of 12 June 2008 not only saw pledges of a further USD 21 billion but also reviewed the procedures needed to make international aid more effectively and precisely oriented towards priorities and to prevent corruption. Measures are also necessary in terms of security, by providing Afghanistan with additional combat troops in the most difficult areas. In this regard, MEPs stress that the US operation 'Enduring Freedom' could be perceived as counterproductive if the military pressure on the insurgents is not matched by a strengthened political process through which the Afghan authorities reach out to all segments of the population.

Strengthen security: efforts must be made to strengthen the fight against local and international terrorism, religious extremism, ethnic extremism, ethnic separatism and all actions aimed at subverting the territorial integrity and state unity of Afghanistan. Parliament supports the efforts of NATO forces to improve security in the country and tackle local and international terrorism. Parliament recalls that Afghanistan's security problems are more complex than just a war on terror and they therefore require more than a military solution. According to the Parliament, security and the rule of law are interdependent, and strengthening the rule of law is necessary in order to enable the country's citizens to make healthy economic and social choices. Parliament also stresses the urgent need to develop a balanced and sustainable approach to security sector reform, providing for a professional national army and police force. However, it is worth noting that the overall outcome of police reform efforts during the past five years has been disappointing. Therefore, the international community and the EU police mission (EUPOL) must continue their efforts to develop Afghanistan's own police force, characterised by respect for human rights and the rule of law. In this context, the EU must increase considerably the resources envisaged for EUPOL, in terms of both personnel and financing (in particular, Parliament regret the fact that the EUPOL mission has yet to reach full strength).

Security and development: according to the Parliament, provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) should concentrate on specific objectives related to security, training and working with the Afghan police and military, and supporting the reach of the central government into insecure areas. There is an urgent need to develop and strengthen the nascent civil society in Afghanistan, in order to develop a broad awareness of the importance of human rights and gender equality as well as the protection of minorities. In order to overcome the culture of violence prevailing in Afghan society, the international donor community should lend financial and technical support to local projects aimed at reconciliation.

Strengthen freedom of expression: all efforts must be made to ensure freedom of the media and the press. In this context, Parliament expresses its concern about President Karzai's refusal to sign the draft media law. It therefore calls on the Afghan Government to undertake to guarantee effective freedom of speech for all its citizens, starting with the defence of Internet freedom. It also emphasises the importance of a forward-looking mass media law that is mindful of the country's religious and cultural values without curtailing the independence of the media. Parliament is very concerned about the rising number of attacks on journalists, and calls on the Afghan authorities to seriously investigate these violations.

Death penalty: Parliament expresses its concern for the physical integrity of Ms Malalai Joya, Member of the Wolesi Jirga, and of Latif Pedram, two human rights activists under house arrest. Once again, it calls on the Afghan authorities to introduce the moratorium on the death penalty as well as for fair trials for those individuals who are facing the death penalty.

Women's rights: while Parliament notes the unquestionable progress made in terms of women's rights, it remains concerned about the huge income disparities between men and women, the very low literacy rate of women and the injustices ? induced by cultural practices ? suffered by women and girls. It stresses the urgent need for measures aimed at protecting the rights of women as well as the need to earmark funds for them (particularly with a view to their education).

Afghan refugees: Parliament draws attention to the fact that the UNHCR has helped 3.69 million Afghan refugees to return to Afghanistan since March 2002, but that, despite these returns, approximately 3.5 million Afghans still remain in Pakistan and Iran. It is concerned about the decline in funding for Afghan refugees, and underlines that maintaining a successful repatriation programme is likely to become more expensive. According to the Parliament, the safe and voluntary return of Afghan refugees and displaced persons should remain a high priority for the international community. Parliament calls on the Commission and the Member States to increase funding for refugee reintegration.

Trafficking of drugs and opium: Parliament expresses its deep concern about the ever-expanding trafficking of opium, and stresses that this trafficking is a source of corruption and undermines public institutions, particularly those in the security and justice sectors. Parliament states that the international community led by the Afghan government must develop a long-term strategy aimed primarily at comprehensive rural development to curtail poppy cultivation.

Parliament calls on the US Government to abandon its crop eradication policy and notably the use of "Roundup" for aerial sprayings, a substance which is associated with serious environmental and health hazards, inasmuch as targeting poppy farmers will only fuel resentment against the international troop presence.

Furthermore, the major social and health problems caused by drug addiction in general, and the social and economic consequences for addicted Afghan women in particular, appear to be catastrophic (according to a survey in 2005, there were 920 000 drug users in Afghanistan, of which 120 000 were women). Parliament considers that the government of Afghanistan is currently unable to enforce the anti-drug laws in the country. The international community must therefore devise appropriate programmes, activities and awareness-raising campaigns targeting addicted women and their families.

Lastly, Parliament recalls the European Parliament's initiative to support democracy-building with parliaments in third countries, and resolve to make use of it for capacity-building of the Afghan Parliament.