

Vygaudas Ušackas
EU Special Representative for Afghanistan

Dear Special Representative Vygaudas Ušackas,

We, the European Network of NGOs in Afghanistan, would like to congratulate you on your appointment as EU Special Representative for Afghanistan. As a network of fifteen European NGOs we value the EU's strong tradition of supporting governance and human security in Afghanistan. We are certain that the EU's new External Action Service, under your leadership, could further strengthen the European support to the Afghan people.

Many of our member agencies, some with thirty years experience in country, have watched with concern how donors place a disproportionate emphasis on the international military intervention. Last year, with dismay, we concluded that for every Euro EU and member states spend on civilian reconstruction in Afghanistan, five Euro are spent on military operationsⁱ. Despite this imbalance in actual spending all stakeholders agree that a political, not military, solution is what will secure the peace.

We are convinced that as a distinguished diplomat you agree that political solutions rely on credible and sustainable state institutions. Effective development cooperation relies on domestic ownership, strong participation of civil society and the inclusion of women in decision-making. Similarly the possible success of a military counterinsurgency strategy is dependant on functioning and credible civilian governance. Thus, if the negative developments are to be turned around, focus must be on how the international community and the Afghan political leadership can address the current crisis of governance.

The new EU foreign policy emphasises a strengthened relationship between EU and NATOⁱⁱ. This is a sensitive relationship in Afghanistan. The EU needs to continue being perceived as a non-military actor by Afghan civilians and all parties in the conflict. This is crucial not only to secure the credibility of the EU as a donor committed to the ANDS but also for the safety of the many NGOs that work hard to maintain impartial relationships with Afghan citizens while implementing projects funded by the EU.

Afghan women need to be fully involved in the reconciliation and reintegration of armed opposition groups. Although we know EU shares this position the low level of involvement we have seen so far concerns many of our members and their Afghan counterpartsⁱⁱⁱ. We therefore think it should be of highest priority for the new EUSR to ensure that women can participate in a meaningful way in reintegration programmes and reconciliation talks.

Key recommendations:

- Build a European consensus on direct support to sub national governance. Significantly increase support to administrative capacity of provincial institutions and strengthen the link between Community Development Councils and the provincial administration.
- Protect EU's reputation as a non-military donor in Afghanistan. Ensure that development funding reflects long-term priorities of the ANDS and appropriate needs assessments rather than military strategy.
- Ensure in all ways possible that women have a chance to participate in a meaningful way in reintegration programmes and reconciliation talks.

We would be very pleased if we could elaborate on the above mentioned points in a meeting with you in Kabul or Brussels. We wish you all the best in your new position.

With kind regards,

Paul van den Berg
Chair of ENNA

ENNA

European Network of
NGOs in Afghanistan

ⁱ Survey conducted by SCA and ENNA in 2009 comparing ODA and military costs in Afghanistan for EU and member states.

(http://www.ennanet.eu/admin/preview/14279/news/index/costs_mil_civ_EU_English_7_Oct_09-2-.pdf)

ⁱⁱ Address by HR Catherine Ashton, Joint Debate on Foreign and Security Policy, European Parliament 10th March 2010.

(http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/113255.pdf)

ⁱⁱⁱ Press release by the Spanish Presidency of the European Union, 25th February 2010, (www.delvie.ec.europa.eu/.../eu.../eu.../PC%20no.795%20-%20EU%20on%20AFGH.pdf)