GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER TO PARLIAMENT
ON THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN AND ON FINLAND’S
OVERALL SUPPORT TO AFGHANISTAN, INCLUDING
PARTICIPATION IN THE “RESOLUTE SUPPORT MISSION”
MILITARY CRISIS MANAGEMENT OPERATION
# CONTENTS

1 Introduction ................................................................................................................. 4  
2 Assessment of the current situation in Afghanistan ....................................................... 5  
   Overall assessment ....................................................................................................... 5  
   The political context .................................................................................................... 7  
   The security situation and the Afghan security authorities ......................................... 8  
   Human rights and the position of women, including health and education issues .... 9  
3 Economic development ............................................................................................... 10  
   The reconciliation process ......................................................................................... 11  
   Regional cooperation ................................................................................................. 12  
3 The comprehensive approach, and the forms of Finnish aid ........................................ 13  
   3.1 Partnership Agreement between Finland and Afghanistan ....................... 14  
   3.2 Development funding ......................................................................................... 15  
   Priorities of Finnish development cooperation .......................................................... 16  
   Impact assessment and evaluation of the comprehensive approach ......................... 17  
   Risk management ....................................................................................................... 18  
   3.3 Civilian crisis management ................................................................................. 19  
   3.4 Military crisis management ............................................................................... 21  
   ISAF and the transfer of security responsibility ............................................................ 21  
   Impact of Finnish ISAF participation on Finland’s defence capability development ... 23  
   Resolute Support Mission: principles and objectives .................................................. 24  
   Nature, level of ambition and legal basis of the RSM .................................................. 25  
   The security situation and risk assessment with regard to the RSM ......................... 26  
   Finnish participation in the RSM .............................................................................. 27  
   Cost of Finnish participation ..................................................................................... 28  
   Goals for Finnish participation ............................................................................... 28  
   Consulting the Parliament ......................................................................................... 29  
4 Economic relations between Finland and Afghanistan ................................................ 29  
5 Coordination of Finland’s national support activities .................................................. 30
1 Introduction

The purpose of this White Paper is to provide the Finnish Parliament with an assessment of the current situation in Afghanistan and to inform it of the overall support given by Finland to Afghanistan, and also to consult the Parliament on Finland’s participation in the Resolute Support Mission (RSM) pursuant to Section 3, Paragraph 1, of the Act on Military Crisis Management (211/2006). As requested by Parliament, this White Paper has been prepared from a comprehensive perspective.

Finland has been participating in stabilisation, reconstruction and development operations in Afghanistan since 2002. Finland’s involvement in Afghanistan began soon after the fall of the Taliban regime and, in line with the comprehensive approach principle, it consists of crisis management and development cooperation.

From the very beginning, Finland participated in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), crucial in the stabilisation of Afghanistan, with a maximum deployment of 195 Finnish soldiers. In addition, Finland has spent a total of €220 million to date to fund development cooperation activities and humanitarian aid in Afghanistan. The size of this assistance has grown gradually, as the handover of security responsibility to Afghan authorities has made it possible to scale back the level of military presence. Civilian crisis management has also played a major role in Finland’s development efforts.

While Afghanistan has taken major steps to encourage social progress, more efforts will be needed for a long time. Afghanistan started off at an extremely low level in late 2001 following several decades of warfare and Taliban administration. The country’s social and technical infrastructure and its economy had been virtually destroyed. Despite some positive developments, progress in many areas of society will remain slow and laborious in the coming years, and the security situation will continue to be undermined by extremist group actions and crime.

The first priority is to keep progress on the right track and prevent the country from relapsing into conflict and chaos, because such a prospect would not only jeopardise the future of Afghanistan but also regional and international security. Moreover, it would go against the goals Finland has set for its operations in Afghanistan in terms of international peace and security, the reduction of poverty, the promotion of human rights and equality, good governance and the rule of law, and the fight against illicit drugs and international criminality.

All Finnish action in Afghanistan must be planned in the long term, with due regard to the risk factors involved. The ultimate goal is to back up the country’s own efforts and ownership, for really counts are the stabilisation and development policies pursued by the Afghan government itself.

In April 2013, Finland and Afghanistan signed a Partnership Agreement which runs to 2024. The goal is to continue stabilisation and development efforts in Afghanistan from a
comprehensive perspective. Accordingly, the focus has already been shifted to development efforts, coupled with peacebuilding and statebuilding activities. Crisis management efforts will, however, still be needed to sustain the operational capacity of the Afghan security authorities. As of the beginning of 2015, ISAF forces will be replaced by the more restricted Resolute Support Mission (RSM), and the EUPOL police operation will also continue.

Finland will continue to focus and devise its efforts in Afghanistan so as to support optimally both Afghanistan's own development needs and Finland's specific national objectives.

2 Assessment of the current situation in Afghanistan

Overall assessment

Afghanistan has made significant advances in social and economic development over the last decade. The country has successfully organised national and local elections without external assistance. Afghanistan’s basic infrastructure is being rebuilt, health and education services have been enhanced considerably, and there has been a marked improvement in equality compared to the initial situation. The country is in the process of laying its economic foundations, and the mining industry is expected to make a significant contribution to the national budget in the future. Regional cooperation is being stepped up with a view to reinforcing the infrastructure and intensifying foreign trade. Yet Afghanistan still faces extensive and profound problems.

Achieving political stability will be a key priority. The new government’s operational capacity and the ability of the different population groups to cooperate are key to further progress in Afghanistan. The risks of the country splitting up and tensions mounting between population groups have been thus far been avoided with the formation of a national unity government. The situation is nevertheless still critical, and there is a risk that discord and rivalry will further escalate.

Yet it seems that so many different actors have already benefited from Afghanistan’s development that the political will to sustain current progress is now stronger than before. At the same time, the younger and more educated share of Afghan population has started to contribute to the rebuilding of Afghan society.

Despite these improvements, the country’s governance and economy are still undermined by a substantial lack of capacity, retarding development efforts in all fields. Public confidence in the national government and public authorities has traditionally been very low in Afghanistan, and abuse and corruption have only added to the distrust. It is vital that not only the new national unity government but also regional and local government bodies have the capacity to operate and tackle problems across the country. Upholding good governance and the rule of law is essential in building Afghanistan’s future.

Setting up a well-functioning economy and creating new livelihoods and new jobs will be equally crucial for the country’s stabilisation and further evolution. Afghanistan continues to be an extremely poor country by any international standards. The diminishing presence of the
international community, including that of ISAF, has had the effect of reducing economic activity in the country. While the mining sector is a potential source of budget revenues, even substantial ones, job creation also calls for business activity, and it would be important to build up the agricultural sector in order to raise employment levels. At the same time, the share of the drug economy must be reduced successfully. Major advances are required to curb the type of corruption that is endemic in Southern Asia and hinders economic development in society in many ways. Afghanistan will continue to need foreign financial aid to cover costs such as civil service salaries, including those of the security authorities.

Afghanistan’s security situation is likely to remain troubled for a long time and may even take a new turn for the worse. Extremist activity is stimulated by aid from abroad, which the government has failed to cut, and such aid may be decisive in enabling rebel activity to continue. The national reconciliation process has been moving forward with difficulty, and its prospects are still uncertain. The new leadership has, however, adopted the promotion of the reconciliation process as one of its goals, underlining that there can only be a political solution to the country’s security problem.

The security situation varies greatly across the country, the southern and eastern provinces being the most affected. The reduction in foreign troops and their withdrawal may enable extremist groups to spread more widely in some parts of the country even if major cities and key routes would remain under government control. Better local governance, new livelihoods and improved living conditions in Afghan cities and villages also play a key role in enhancing the security situation. They will boost popular confidence in national, regional and local government, thereby consolidating the support of the local population. The Afghan security forces, strong in numbers, are estimated to have the capability to assume responsibility for security to a large extent. They are nevertheless going to need long-term foreign aid and funding.

The human rights situation has shown many positive developments, but a lot still remains to be done. The most vulnerable groups are women and children, especially girls. The difficulties in achieving equality are partly related to historical traditions and partly to the security situation and the overall functioning of the justice sector. Improvements are still badly needed in human rights, good governance, and the development of the rule of law. This situation can in part be explained by the fact that shortcomings are today increasingly reported, which obviously is necessary in order to redress the situation.

Compared to its neighbours, Afghanistan has a relatively free press. There are about 20 television channels and some 80 radio channels. The radio remains a popular channel for information. Journalistic work has nevertheless been hampered in many cases, and eight journalists were killed in Afghanistan in 2014, including three foreign journalists during the presidential election. The young urban generation is actively involved in the social media, and there are roughly 20 million mobile phone subscriptions in the country.

Regional cooperation has been growing gradually with the help of international support. Cooperation between the countries in the region is important in many ways: it is vital to step up economic development and notably to ensure a more efficient use of energy and water
resources, better transport connections and enhanced trade. Cooperation is equally crucial to fight the narcotics trade and crime and, in particular, to suppress cross-border rebel activity in order to improve Afghanistan’s security situation.

It is not possible to give a precise estimate of the mid-term outlook for Afghan society. The most likely scenario indicates gradual and laborious progress with occasional setbacks. Even in the best-case scenario, Afghanistan is likely to remain, for a long time, a poor and fragile state dependent on foreign support. The prospect of the country slipping into chaos cannot be entirely ruled out yet, but it is equally possible that the situation improves sooner than expected.

What ultimately counts are the efforts of the Afghan government itself and its ability to pursue the most urgent reform measures. The open-minded and ambitious reform programme launched by Ashraf Ghani, the new President, calls for extensive reforms with a focus on Afghan ownership, but it is yet too early to estimate its outcome. Other significant factors are the readiness of the international community to promote this process, and – in the eventuality of growing difficulties – its willingness to prevent the situation from deteriorating.

The political context

Afghanistan is experiencing a concurrent political, military and economic transition. A milestone was reached in September 2014 with the end of the 13-year-long rule of President Hamid Karzai. At first the presidential election seemed like a success, the Afghans flocking to the polls during the first round. The high voter participation was seen as a strong message from the citizens in favour of democracy, all the more so as the rebels attempted to sabotage the vote through threats and violent actions. The second round, however, ended in a stalemate due to election fraud allegations and an ongoing power struggle. The United States and the international community helped to resolve the situation, and the second-round poll results were audited. When it was found that election fraud had occurred, an estimated one million votes were discounted.

A U.S.-brokered political agreement on a national unity government was finally reached between the two second-round candidates. This outcome, based on a pact between the two main contestants, was consistent with neither the election result nor the Constitution, but under the circumstances it was the only way to solve the political deadlock which – when prolonged – might have plunged Afghanistan into great trouble.

This procedure, however, came under strong criticism in the country. Citizens had not shown much trust in the government before the election, and their confidence in the electoral process and in politicians now suffered a further blow because of the post-election agreement. The operational capacity of the new government is now essential in restoring this trust.

Under the political agreement reached, Ashraf Ghani, who had earlier served as Finance Minister, was elected President of Afghanistan, and the former Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah was appointed his Chief Executive Officer (rough equivalent of a premier’s post) in
charge of the government’s enforcement tasks. All ministerial posts and key administrative posts will be divided between the two political camps. The goal is to have the constitutional tribal assembly (the loya jirga, or the Grand Council) convened to discuss the necessity of a prime minister’s post, which does not exist under the current Afghan Constitution. It is not yet known when the government will be fully operational, for all ministerial nominations are subject to vote in Parliament.

It is yet too early to estimate how the national unity government will function and whether confidence can be built between the different players. The unity government faces great challenges in enacting nationwide reforms, maintaining security and laying economic foundations at a time when international military presence is diminishing and the country’s aid dependency persists.

The international community is willing to go on supporting Afghanistan, provided that the country commits itself to carrying through the reforms it has promised. As for international relations, the elected government is expected to focus on stepping up regional cooperation with its neighbours and also on its cooperation with international supporters.

The security situation and the Afghan security authorities

The main components of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) are the national army (Afghan National Army, ANA) and the police force (Afghan National Police, ANP). The overall strength of the ANSF is 352,000 personnel (ANA 195,000 and ANP 157,000). The total annual budget of the ANSF was originally estimated to reach $4.1 billion, to be funded jointly by the Afghan government and the international community. The overall size of ANSF is planned to be reduced to 228,500. The main goal of the international community is to ensure the ability of the ANSF to keep the troubled internal security situation under control. The Afghan authorities, however, would like to see the ANSF better equipped to carry out external defence tasks, too, but the donors have not been keen to fund such operations.

Responsibility over the country’s security is being gradually transferred from the NATO-led ISAF to the Afghan National Security Forces. Since June 2013, the ANSF has taken the lead for combat operations against the rebels with the support of the international troops. When ISAF’s mandate expires at the end of 2014, full security responsibility will be handed over to the ANSF as the rest of the international combat force will leave the country. ISAF’s successor, the Resolute Support Mission, will mainly be tasked with providing training and assistance to the Afghan military, but this international force will no longer lend them support in combat situations. In addition, a small U.S. unit that will engage in counter-terrorism operations is likely to stay on in Afghanistan.

The competence and operational capability of the Afghan security forces have improved significantly over the last few years and they have been commended, for example, for maintaining security during the presidential election. Yet the security situation, which varies greatly across the country, is still open to many risks. With ISAF reducing its presence, the insurgents have managed to gain more foothold in some areas, including the province of Helmand during 2014. They may even extend their activities into new areas now that the level
of foreign support is falling. There has been some variation in the Taliban’s choice of targets for attacks over the years, ranging from Afghan security authorities to foreign troops and other international players and including also ordinary Afghan civilians. More recently, Taliban attacks have mostly targeted local security authorities now in charge of security in the country. Some violent actions can also be attributed to criminal elements.

The rebels are not likely to pose a real military threat to the Afghan government. This is one of the reasons why the Taliban favour various types of terrorist attacks: they arouse fear and make people believe that the rebels are stronger than they actually are.

Safeguarding the integrity of the ANSF is a priority goal in view of improving the security situation. Their operational capacity has been growing steadily, but there are still many problems: Not all those who have received training want to stay in the ANSF ranks. Moreover, the integrity of the ANSF is dependent on the national government’s ability to lead operations and pay security staff salaries, which again calls for international support. Yet another problem is the continuous flow of funding for rebels across the borders. The termination of ISAF will also result in a stronger local leadership at the expense of the central government.

A swift turn for the better in the Afghan security situation is not a very likely scenario. There are several such factors involved whose role cannot yet be anticipated as the new Afghan government is only taking its first steps. A fruitful reconciliation process would be the best way to curtail violent activity by extremist groups, but for the time being we should expect the security situation to remain unstable.

*Human rights and the position of women, including health and education issues*

The human rights and equality situation has improved significantly in Afghanistan over the last 12 years. Advances have been made in women’s constitutional and legal rights and better access to health care and education. The share of women in government and administration, including the security forces, has been growing little by little. There is a quota for women members in Parliament, but the level of participation has been fluctuating due to difficulties in meeting that quota.

There are still great challenges in ensuring that current advances can be sustained and further progress can take place. Keeping progress on the right track calls for ownership and active measures by Afghanistan and solid support from partner countries. Women’s participation in society is still constrained by poverty and many traditional customs and attitudes, and violence against women and girls runs rife. Afghanistan is still one of the most challenging countries for women to live in.

The fulfillment of commitments is monitored regularly in the context of the follow-up work on the goals agreed at the Tokyo conference, which discussed Afghan development issues, and in the United Nations Human Rights Council. Afghanistan has signed the main human rights conventions and transposed them into its national legislation. It is also party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The setting up of an independent
human rights commission in Afghanistan and establishing its role as the country’s leading human rights actor can be counted as a major achievement.

The number of reported human rights violations has grown over the last few years. Rather than being a direct sign of an increase in the number of cases, however, it is an indication of better confidence in human rights actors and Afghan authorities, their improved operational capacity and greater awareness of human rights issues among the people.

Life expectancy has risen to 60 years compared with 44 years in the early 2000’s. The under-five mortality rate has dropped from 172 to 97 per 1,000 live births. The coverage of basic health care services has increased from 9 per cent in 2001 to over 60 per cent. Maternal mortality is estimated to have decreased from 1,600 deaths to 327 deaths per 100,000 childbirths. Today 39 per cent of all births are assisted by trained medical staff, while the figure was as low as 6 per cent at the turn of the millennium. Whereas in the early 2000’s only some 20 per cent of the population had access to clean drinking water, their share now exceeds 60 per cent.

Educational opportunities for children and young people have improved. For example, in 2001 about one million children went to school, but today, UNICEF estimates their number at 8.3 million, the share of girls being roughly 40 per cent of all schoolchildren. Yet the literacy rate remains very low: a mere 30 per cent of the adult population are literate, and the share of women is even lower. The position of children is generally very weak due to the unstable security situation, and determined and sustained efforts will be needed to ensure their safety.

Economic development

Reinforcing Afghanistan’s economy and livelihoods, creating new jobs and securing the national revenue base are crucial for the country’s future. In addition, the proceeds of economic growth should be distributed evenly across society, considering that 36 per cent of the population still live below the poverty line (defined as $1.25 per day).

The Afghan economy has been growing rapidly since 2002. The low starting level, international development cooperation efforts and the extensive presence of ISAF forces have all contributed to the fast pace of growth. In 2013, however, economic growth slackened, amounting to a mere 3.6 per cent despite the record-high crop yield. Increasing uncertainty due to changes in the political scene and the security sector resulted in a diminished confidence of investors and consumers alike. Economic growth was still weak in 2014 as a result of the prolonged presidential election process, an atmosphere of general uncertainty, and a fall in agricultural production due to weather conditions. In the coming years (2015–17), annual economic growth is estimated to reach 5 per cent. The services sector accounts for roughly half of the GNI, the share of agriculture and industry being 20 and 25 per cent respectively. The GNI per capita is $688. Were the illicit drug economy counted in the GNI, its share would be an estimated 15 per cent.

Due to poor domestic revenue collection, Afghanistan remains heavily reliant on external aid. In 2012, development aid receipts accounted for roughly 33 per cent of the GNI. ISAF has
also made a significant contribution to Afghan economy. The development funding notwithstanding, the national budget showed a deep deficit of over $500 million in autumn 2014, plunging the state into payment difficulties and generating requests for more development funds. Financial constraints may pose a particular threat to allocations for civil sector activities, such as education and health services. In 2013, domestic revenue collection represented 9.5 per cent of the GNI as a result of the economic downturn and deficient tax and customs administration. The services sector is also affected by reductions in the formerly 130,000-strong ISAF troops and the expiry of their mandate. Improving customs revenue collection and introducing a VAT system are indispensable measures to raise the level of national revenue. Afghanistan must therefore press ahead with its structural economic reforms.

Job creation is crucial for the economy: owing to population growth, approximately 400,000 new job seekers enter the labour market every year. While the mining sector has potential to generate revenue in the mid term, it will not be able to provide a significant number of new jobs. Indeed, creating more employment would seem possible especially in the agricultural sector, which even today provides for more than 50 per cent of all jobs in Afghanistan. Increasing efficiency and sustainability in agricultural production and notably building new irrigation systems are considered imperative for sustainable economic growth and development. It would be equally important to consolidate the infrastructure, notably by improving transport connections and the energy supply.

The new Afghan President Ashraf Ghani regards a stronger private sector and better market access as key economic factors. The private sector is now seen as a major source of prosperity for Afghanistan. Other important goals include making tax collection more systematic and introducing anti-corruption measures, including an immediate re-opening of the court case on the Kabul Bank corruption scandal. When extensive financial malpractice was exposed at Kabul Bank in 2012, the IMF-led international community pushed the Afghan government to take measures in order to recover the funds. This fraud case has shaken confidence in the country’s banking sector, affecting also entrepreneurs’ access to loans. Moreover, Mr Ghani has identified the promotion of women’s economic independence and their up-skilling as vital measures in the advancement of both gender equality and employment.

The reconciliation process

The current Afghan regime is engaged in an armed conflict with extremist movements composed chiefly of members of the Pashtu population. They operate mainly in Southern and Eastern Afghanistan and have their ideological background in radical Islamism. The best known is the Taliban, represented by various groupings active both in Afghanistan and Pakistan. While Afghanistan traditionally accuses Pakistan of lending support to the Taliban, Pakistan is simultaneously in conflict with its own Taliban movement. There are also some other radical Islamist extremist groups waging armed rebellion against the Afghan administration. These groups operate through international networks, and terrorists from other countries are active within them.
The Afghan reconciliation process involves several elements: At the national level, the primary goal is to suppress armed Taliban activity and promote national consensus among the different population groups and political actors. Another goal is to cut the external help received by the Taliban, by stepping up cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours, notably with Pakistan. The international community is supporting the above efforts.

The Afghan government system features the High Peace Council (HPC), which is directly subordinated to the President of Afghanistan. Former President Burhanuddin Rabbani was appointed chairman of the HPC, but when he was assassinated by the Taliban in September 2011, his son Salahuddin Rabbani was appointed the new chair. The work of the HPC has fallen short of expectations, and it now faces an uncertain future. President Ghani has nevertheless identified the reconciliation process as his main priority, underlining the importance of a political solution.

Along with the reconciliation process, a reintegration process has been launched to encourage foot soldiers to quit rebel ranks by giving them a chance to return to civil society. This process has been channelled mainly through the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP) set up in 2010. The APRP has obtained some results, although more modest than expected. Approximately 10,000 former rebels have participated in the Programme to date.

The ability of especially Afghanistan and Pakistan to cooperate is considered important for a successful outcome of the reconciliation process and in order to restrain rebel activity. There have been some advances: Cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan has been promoted via several high-level tripartite meetings with the support of Great Britain, the United States, Turkey, and China, among others. Moreover, negotiations have been opened with a view to drafting a treaty on strategic cooperation between the two countries. Effective reconciliation between Afghanistan and Pakistan is also interlinked with the evolution of Pakistani-Indian relations, for some elements in Pakistan remain reserved about India’s engagement in Afghanistan.

Regional cooperation

Although there are a few regional cooperation organisations active in Afghanistan’s immediate vicinity, mutual cooperation for the benefit of the entire region has started off modestly due to conflicting interests and mistrust between the countries. Stabilisation and further progress in Afghanistan are dependent on enhanced economic cooperation in the region, which would create fresh opportunities for the expansion of Afghanistan’s foreign trade and for the opening up of new transport and energy connections. Regional cooperation may also prove helpful in suppressing the support that the rebels are receiving from the neighbouring areas, notably from Pakistan but also from Iran.

Certainly the most significant regional initiative for Afghanistan’s future is the Istanbul Process, which was originally facilitated by Turkey. It is a political process owned by the countries in the region, aiming to reinforce economic cooperation and, in the longer term, also political cooperation between what are known as the Heart of Asia countries. Cooperation mechanisms include six Confidence Building Measures (CBM), each with their own regional
lead country. The Istanbul Process receives financial aid from countries outside the region, including Finland.

Since 2005, Afghanistan and its neighbours have been organising RECCA Conferences (Regional Economic Cooperation Conferences on Afghanistan), with the purpose of reviving economic cooperation within the region. The countries concerned strive to eliminate obstacles to trade and upgrade and build up badly-needed regional infrastructure: roads, railways, civil aviation connections, gas pipelines, hydropower plants and electric power lines. The two most ambitious projects are the TAPI pipeline designed to transport natural gas from Turkmenistan via Afghanistan into Pakistan and further into India, and CASA-1000, enabling electricity transmission from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzia into Afghanistan and Pakistan. Successful regional cooperation would benefit considerably not only Afghanistan but also its neighbours by invigorating the entire regional economy and by facilitating energy supply.

3 The comprehensive approach, and the forms of Finnish aid

The coordination process between the Afghan government and international actors is long-standing and intense. Cooperation between Afghanistan and the international community and the efforts for the country’s development were originally based on the comprehensive Afghanistan Compact document adopted in 2006. The Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB), which convenes in Kabul, was set up for cooperation purposes, and it is currently the key coordination forum for discussing the development efforts for Afghanistan at a concrete level.

Another mechanism is the International Contact Group (ICG), which embraces more than 50 countries, international organisations and other actors (including the UN, NATO, the EU and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, OIC). It brings together senior officials from the participating countries and representatives of the Afghan government to discuss the situation in the country. The mission of the ICG is to draft strategic decisions in preparation of international conferences on Afghanistan and to ensure a constant flow of information between the senior officials involved. Finland hosted the IGC meeting in June 2012 in preparation of the Tokyo Ministerial Conference where the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF) was adopted as a guideline for cooperation between Afghanistan and the international community. The TMAF sets out their mutual obligations regarding the development of Afghanistan.

The Afghanistan Compact document and the earlier development strategies had proved to be too wide-ranging and general in nature. The reform needs were therefore expressed more clearly and in more concrete terms in the TMAF document, stating that Afghanistan must implement effective and accountable strategies for economic growth and social development. Following the Tokyo Conference, the choice of priorities has been discussed further, assuming that the most urgent reforms should be identified as priorities to be carried out first.

Afghanistan is also a member of the g7+ group, which includes 20 fragile states. The purpose of the g7+ is to promote comprehensive development, peacebuilding and statebuilding in
fragile states within the framework of the 2011 New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, which emphasises the target country’s ownership over its development process.

Regular coordination of activities within the EU and together with the UN is an integral part of Finland’s policy with regard to Afghanistan. The EU advocates shared goal setting and endeavours to speak with one voice in key international arenas. The annual development funding provided by the EU and its member states for Afghanistan totals over one billion euros, making the country the number one beneficiary of EU aid in the entire world. Under the Multiannual Indicative Programme for Afghanistan, the country will receive €1.4 billion in EU assistance during the period up to 2020. The EU strategy in Afghanistan 2014–16 was announced in June 2014, and negotiations on a Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development (CAPD) between the EU and Afghanistan are under way. The UN assistance mission UNAMA is charged with coordinating the civilian actions of the international community in Afghanistan with the aim of strengthening the country’s sovereignty, leadership and ownership.

There are currently about 140 Finns engaged in Afghanistan: 85 of them work for ISAF and 35 for EUPOL, with another 20 employed in various international organisations and NGOs and at the Finnish Embassy in Kabul.

As a rule, all forms of Finnish aid are designed comprehensively so that they will complement each other, thus supporting the goals of Finland’s policy towards Afghanistan.

3.1 Partnership Agreement between Finland and Afghanistan

Finland and Afghanistan signed a Partnership Agreement in April 2013 during a visit of President Hamid Karzai to Finland. Under the Agreement, Finland commits to supporting Afghanistan’s development up to 2024. In keeping with the mutual commitments made at international conferences on Afghanistan in London (2010), Kabul (2010), Bonn (2011) and Tokyo (2012), development cooperation between the Parties will seek to strengthen Afghan democracy, promote good governance and the rule-of-law principle through, inter alia, developing regional and local governance, and to improve the conditions for Afghanistan’s own economic activity and participatory economic growth as well as sustainable use of natural resources. Issues related to human rights and equality as well as education and especially the education of girls, are high on the agenda. The ultimate goal is a society where all Afghans can build a better, safer and more prosperous country. Afghanistan has signed similar partnership agreements with other countries, including Great Britain, Germany, Norway and Denmark.

In line with the commitments given by Finland at the Tokyo Conference in 2012, the Finnish Government will support Afghanistan for the long term by providing development assistance even beyond 2014. Afghanistan has defined the post-2014 era as the Transformation Decade. The fulfillment of the commitment of the Finnish Government is conditional on advances made by the Afghan Government in implementing the full range of undertakings it entered.
into at the Kabul, Bonn and Tokyo conferences as outlined in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework on mutual responsibility.

The Afghan government and the international actors have agreed that, in line with the commitments given at the Kabul and Tokyo Conferences, international assistance will be used to support Afghanistan’s own, jointly-prepared development programmes and development priorities. Finland has been involved in preparing and adopting those commitments.

3.2 Development funding

Afghanistan has been receiving development funding from Finland since 2002. Finland has pledged to provide long-term support for Afghanistan at a series of broad-based international conferences on Afghanistan (London 2006, Paris 2008, The Hague 2009, London 2010, Kabul 2010, Bonn 2011, Chicago 2012, Tokyo 2012). The aim of the London ministerial summit in December 2014 is to strengthen the commitments entered into by the previous Afghan governments and the international community.

Prepared in close international coordination, the documents adopted at these conferences also set out the obligations of the Afghan government to bring about progress in return for extensive international support.

Since the beginning of 2014, Finnish development funding for Afghanistan has risen to a total of €30 million per year. Apart from country-specific development aid, it includes humanitarian assistance, support for NGOs, and ODA-eligible (Official Development Assistance) funding for civilian crisis management, the latter three amounting to a total of €10 million each year. Finland intends to maintain this overall level also in the coming years, provided that such development aid will be endorsed by the Finnish Parliament. Humanitarian aid will be provided on a needs basis and, following the policy guidelines for Finnish humanitarian aid, it will be channelled through the UN system, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and Finnish humanitarian aid organisations.

Under the Partnership Agreement, the Finnish Government confirmed that it will provide at least 50 per cent of its assistance through the Afghan national budget and also align 80 per cent of its assistance with the National Priority Programs (NPPs) of Afghanistan. Moreover, Finland pledged to pursue development cooperation in line with the Afghan Aid Management Policy (2013) in a way that will improve aid efficiency and effectiveness.

In practical terms, Finland will mainly channel its assistance through the World Bank-run Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) and UN operative agencies, whose goal is to make good use of Afghanistan’s budget system and support its improvement. This arrangement will also help to ensure the delivery of aid, guarantee its effectiveness and efficiency, and prevent opportunities for corruption.

Under the Partnership Agreement, part of Finnish development aid will be channelled through NGOs. Finnish support will also contain humanitarian assistance.
Priorities of Finnish development cooperation

In line with the previous White Paper on Afghanistan, endorsed by the Finnish Parliament, the focus of Finland’s development cooperation has been on supporting democracy and good governance, human rights and equality, rural development and new livelihoods. In recent years, Finland has aided Afghanistan to launch the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and prepare a national action plan.

Furthermore, Finland has stepped up its support for educational projects and pursued cooperation with NGOs. The support for NGOs has been chiefly directed at poverty reduction programmes and at promoting human rights and health.

The cross-cutting objectives highlighted in all Finland’s development efforts are: human rights, women’s rights, equality, good governance and anti-corruption activities. As a member of the international community, simultaneously involved in Nordic cooperation, Finland commonly brings these topics to the fore in talks between the Afghan government and international players.

From now on, funding will targeted at three main sectors directly related to Afghanistan’s critical needs and the peacebuilding and statebuilding objectives:

1. justice and security, notably human rights issues and good governance, including the civil police reform;
2. improving basic public services notably in the educational sector, including ensuring the access of girls to formal education and higher female literacy rates;
3. diversifying Afghanistan’s economic base, notably through support to rural livelihoods, and improving the conditions for a sustainable use of the country’s natural resources.

Finland will continue to channel its assistance mainly via UN agencies, including UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP (United Nations Development Program) and UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), and through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund. The main development instrument for Afghanistan is the World Bank-managed ARTF. It provides the Afghan government and donor countries with a coordinated financing mechanism to support Afghanistan’s national budget and priority national investment projects, especially in building economic foundations and creating basic services. The 2012 evaluation noted that the ARTF remains the vehicle of choice for pooled funding, with low overhead/transaction costs, excellent transparency and high accountability. At the same time, it provides a well-functioning arena for policy debate and consensus creation. ARTF monitoring has been bolstered by external review systems.

The ARTF is the main funding channel for Finland’s development cooperation in Afghanistan. In 2014, Finland’s contribution amounted to €9 million. Half of Finnish assistance goes into a multi-sectoral fund which also covers the Incentive Program. The rest is divided between a national programme for rural development and a programme for improvement of quality in education. Finland has been the 12th biggest donor of the Trust Fund and, since the beginning of 2014, also a member of its strategy group thus having a better say in its strategic and development policy decisions.
Human rights and improving the position of women and children are key priorities for Finland in Afghanistan. Finland promotes respect for human rights and equality in Afghanistan through development cooperation, political statements, dialogue and crisis management. Finland endorses the work of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) and promotes the targets of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security). One of the main priorities of our support is to encourage the formal education of children, especially girls, and improve the literacy of women through the programmes of UNICEF, UNESCO, the World Bank and the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan.

As for the development of the Afghan economy, the country’s potential mineral reserves are estimated to be substantial, and tapping them will be one of the most important objectives in the coming years in view of economic and social development. The Geological Survey of Finland (GTK) cooperates with its Afghan counterpart, the Afghanistan Geological Survey, in the field of education and training to raise the level of Afghan knowhow in exploration geophysics and prospecting techniques.

*Impact assessment and evaluation of the comprehensive approach*

The projects and organisations eligible for Finnish development cooperation funding have been subject to careful assessment in terms of development impacts and aid effectiveness. The use of development funds is monitored closely by means of reports, project visits and independent evaluations. Any issues related to corruption or abuse may be brought up by the Finnish Embassy staff in Kabul and in the context of other bilateral and multilateral discussions and contacts. Aid effectiveness will receive increased attention.

In order to focus on the above sectors and on exercising influence, Finland intends to reduce the number of small-scale and short-term operations in Afghanistan. Under the Partnership Agreement, the amounts and objectives of Finland’s bilateral development assistance will be reviewed at senior-level meetings between the two countries at regular intervals. In all its development efforts, Finland will bear in mind conflict sensitivity, paying due attention to the operational environment and the interaction of its own operations with it, in order to ensure that all activities supported by Finland will have a positive impact on peaceful development.

Adequate resources are imperative for high-quality preparation and follow-up of aid and also for advocacy efforts. The current level of human resources dedicated for this purpose is considered sufficient.

Finnish development aid to Afghanistan has been evaluated in 2007 and again in 2014. The 2007 evaluation found that Finland manages its assistance efficiently and it is used in line with the objectives of Finnish development cooperation, the support provided by other international agents and the national development needs defined by Afghanistan itself. It was noted that the bulk of Finnish aid is channelled through the World Bank and UN organisations, thus ensuring its efficient, controlled and centralised use. The 2007 evaluation further considered that a multi-actor engagement is part of risk management in the field of development cooperation.
The 2014 evaluation, carried out as part of a broader thematic evaluation of peace and development, acknowledged that Finnish aid is being managed efficiently, pointing out the monitoring of risk management as an area for further improvement.

In its own development policies, Finland adheres to the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States negotiated between the g7+ group and donor countries, prescribing that the development issues related to societies affected by violent conflict should be increasingly approached from the standpoint of the countries concerned. Finnish development aid complies with the five New Deal goals for peacebuilding and statebuilding: inclusive politics, security, justice, economic foundations, and revenue and services. Finland has been invited by Afghanistan as a member of the New Deal support group based in Kabul.

**Risk management**

The operating conditions in Afghanistan are very challenging, and it will take a long time to bring about sustainable and measurable results. The donors have to commit to long-term operations and accept temporary setbacks in some sectors. In a fragile state like Afghanistan, the risks and challenges involved are even greater than in many other developing countries, and they fall into three main categories. As regards the political situation, the main concern is the operating capacity of the Afghan government in the longer run. This is a country-specific risk, over which donors have limited control. Also related to Afghanistan’s political context and the overall situation are the security risks faced by the donors themselves. The second category includes programme risks, i.e. the risks of the operation not achieving set objectives or proving to be difficult to measure. The reasons may include limited access to certain areas, poor infrastructure and, more generally, a lack of certain fundamental elements which the donors have no control over. The third category covers risks inherent in the functioning of the Afghan governance, such as corruption and bad governance, which affect its ability to bring about development.

Finland observes and evaluates systematically changes and trends in the operational environment in Afghanistan with a view to identifying possible risks and taking action to reduce and control them. Finland takes part in donor coordination, where information and analyses of the operational environment are shared within the donor community. Joint funds and co-financing arrangements help reduce the risks for individual donors’ operations, and they provide a means of sharing the operating expenses for risk assessments and security arrangements. The donors also share project monitoring information and jointly support the efforts of Afghanistan to achieve greater accountability and transparent anti-corruption practices and principles. Flexibility and the ability to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances are given emphasis in all Afghanistan-related project planning.

The nature of the operational environment of Finnish Embassy staff in Kabul and Finnish civilian personnel in Afghanistan will be largely determined by the outcome of the political and security transition. The operational capacity of the new Afghan regime and security authorities plays a decisive role in this. In recent years, rebel attacks have targeted even civilian actors, and attacks have also been carried out in the capital. During the current transition year, Kabul has experienced more attacks of this kind than before. The security
situation of the Finnish mission and Finnish civilian personnel is under constant scrutiny. Arrangements are undertaken to ensure the security of the facilities and of the personnel, and provision is made for changes in the security situation. The Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs assesses the extent of Finland’s representation at regular intervals and prioritises the tasks to be performed.

Risk assessments have repeatedly shown that Afghanistan’s development must be approached from a comprehensive and long-term perspective. Terminating assistance too abruptly constitutes a risk as such and may, at worst, entail uncontrollable consequences. This was experienced back in the 1990’s when the country was left largely to its own devices, resulting in a breakdown of its government structures.

3.3 Civilian crisis management

EUPOL (the EU Police Mission in Afghanistan), which has been in operation since 2007, is the second largest civilian crisis operation of the European Union. Its mission is to support the police reform in Afghanistan as part of a more comprehensive reform of the country’s security sector. EUPOL Afghanistan aims to strengthen police force capabilities and promote the rule of law and human rights through three pillars: support for the institutional reform of the Afghan Ministry of the Interior; professionalisation of the Afghan civilian police (ANP); and better linkages between the police and the justice sector through, for instance, seamless cooperation between the police and prosecution services. The present mandate of the operation will run out by the end of 2014.

The European Union is politically committed to continuing its mission during 2015–16. The EU Foreign Affairs Council adopted the Concept of operations (CONOPS) and the Operation Plan (OPLAN) for EUPOL in summer 2014, but the final decision will have to wait till late 2014 because all further EU planning must consider the forthcoming decisions on the future NATO military crisis management operation. This is because EUPOL has been relying on the medical, logistical and security support provided by ISAF especially for EUPOL field offices outside Kabul. EUPOL operations will be gradually downsized over 2015–16. At present it looks likely that the EUPOL operations in Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif will end during 2015. Further operational planning and leadership will have to adapt to the challenging operational environment and the demanding security situation in the country.

At the moment EUPOL activities therefore have a strong emphasis on transition strategy planning. The handover to Afghans of responsibility for the ongoing assisted activities and training will be a major task. Moreover, EU planning assumes that all post-2016 work will be supported, from the EU side, by the Office of the Special Representative (EUSR) and by the EU delegation to Afghanistan, as well as by other international actors. No detailed plans exist yet, but Afghan ownership and ensuring their commitment have always been high on the agenda. At the same time, the institutional weaknesses of Afghan governance persist, and some rotation of senior staff is expected within EUPOL’s main partner organisations, notably the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice, and possibly also within the police. During the critical transition period, Finland gives priority to the reform processes and their
implementation and to establishing key mentoring contacts. The new Afghan government’s support for the police and justice sector reform programmes must also be ensured.

Afghanistan continues to be a priority area in Finland’s crisis management policy. One in four Finnish experts seconded to civilian crisis management operations are involved in EUPOL operations. Up to 40 Finnish civilian experts have been serving in EUPOL at one time. Half of them have been police officers and the rest various experts specialising in human rights and equality issues and the development of the rule of law. The share of women in Finnish EUPOL staff has been significant, and the deputy head of mission is currently a female Finnish expert. However, the number of Finnish participants will be gradually reduced along with the rest of the mission.

The EUPOL operation currently involves roughly 400 international experts from 22 countries and about 200 Afghans. Approximately one half of the experts are police officers, the rest being law and civilian experts. Alongside Finland, the other EU countries deploying the largest number of experts are Germany, Romania, Sweden and the Netherlands. Experts from such non-EU countries as Canada have also participated in EUPOL activities.

In the planning and furthering of the EUPOL operation, Finland has underscored – alongside expertise relating to police affairs and the rule of law – equality issues, notably an increase in the number of Afghan policewomen and improving the weak position of women in the law enforcement and justice system. Finland considers that continuing the EUPOL mission will send the right message of an ongoing commitment to support Afghanistan. In operative terms it is important to keep on supporting the civilian police and, more generally, the development of the rule of law. The final handover of EUPOL’s training responsibility to competent Afghan authorities is particularly significant.

To implement the comprehensive crisis management, Finland has made use of the synergies between civilian crisis management and development aid cooperation. The cross-cutting objectives of Finland’s development efforts, listed above in the chapter on Finnish development funding for Afghanistan (i.e. human rights, women’s rights, equality, good governance and anti-corruption activities), are all related to EUPOL’s operations and objectives. Of the three main sectors receiving Finnish assistance, “justice and security” is EUPOL’s strong area.

Apart from EUPOL, Finland has been seconding civilian experts to the offices of the EU Special Representative (EUSR) and the NATO Senior Civilian Representative in Kabul and to the office of the Civilian Representative for ISAF Regional Command North in Mazar-e-Sharif.

Finland has also been funding OSCE project activities in support of stabilisation in Afghanistan. For instance, in 2013, financial support was given to a capacity-building project that involved Kyrgyz and Afghan customs authorities and, in 2014, to the Afghanistan election support team in charge of drafting a report following the latest presidential election with a view to improving electoral practices in the country.
3.4 Military crisis management

In line with its comprehensive approach to stabilising the situation in Afghanistan, Finland has been involved in military crisis management to ensure that the ongoing handover of security responsibility to Afghans will take place in a controlled manner. Secure conditions are a prerequisite for achieving a stable political situation and economic progress in the country.

ISAF and the transfer of security responsibility

The multinational ISAF crisis management force, mandated by the UN in 2001 and currently led by NATO, has been operating for nearly thirteen years. The operation has had participation from roughly 50 countries, and the maximum troop strength has been over 130,000 soldiers. The participating NATO partner countries have been closely involved in operative planning. In addition, NATO has been engaged in ISAF-related practical cooperation with Russia, among others.

The mission of ISAF has been to support Afghanistan’s central government, improve its security sector and establish a secure operational environment for aid and reconstruction activities. Launched in 2002 by the initially U.S.-led coalition, the operation first centred in and around Kabul. In 2003 ISAF’s mandate was expanded geographically, and it became a NATO-led operation. ISAF spread its operations all over Afghanistan in late 2006 and, under the revised ISAF strategy, its mission was extended in 2009 to cover counter-insurgency measures. More recently the emphasis in ISAF’s work has been on reinforcing the capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and enabling adequate operational conditions for the ISAF follow-on mission.

Although the security situation remains very fragile in Afghanistan, ISAF has obtained results in helping the ANSF make progress and in transferring security responsibility to it. The capability of the ANSF has been reinforced significantly: it now mostly needs support in order to strengthen the security structures – not for carrying out operations. Certain special capabilities are still lacking, such as aerial support needed for the operations. The ANSF was successful in maintaining security during the presidential election, and it has taken the lead for combat operations against rebels throughout the country.

The handover of security responsibility to Afghan security bodies has been going on since early 2011. The transition entered its final phase in June 2013, and since then ISAF has only played a supportive role. As the operation ends on 31 December 2014, overall responsibility for security will shift over to Afghan authorities. The withdrawal of ISAF forces has taken place gradually: there were fewer than 40,000 servicemen deployed in Afghanistan in October 2014.

During the early stages of ISAF, Finland chose to participate primarily through civil-military cooperation. From 2002 on, it was in the lead for the Kabul CIMIC (Civil-Military Cooperation) team. In 2004, Finland was among the first countries to join the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) operating in Northern Afghanistan. In summer 2007, Finland’s
PRT participation was concentrated in the Mazar-e-Sharif Reconstruction Team that operates across four provinces. The latter was transformed into a Transition Support Team (TST) in 2012. The Finnish troops in Mazar-e-Sharif were based at Camp Northern Lights until May 2014, when the Swedish-led Nordic-Baltic Transition Support Unit (NB TSU) was terminated as a unit. In the German-led Northern Command area, Finland has also participated from 2008 onwards in the operative steering and contact groups in charge of supporting further development of the Afghan army.

The maximum strength of the Finnish crisis management force in Afghanistan (the SKJA) has been nearly 200 soldiers. At present its size is roughly 80. In October 2014 the composition of the Finnish ISAF crisis management force was aligned with the Resolute Support Mission, and preparations are now under way to resume operations under the RSM from 1 January 2015. The majority of the troops will serve in Northern Afghanistan, based at Camp Marmal near the city of Mazar-e-Sharif. Finnish personnel will be deployed in the German-led multinational advisory teams, at the Regional Command North headquarters, in national steering and support units, and in security and rescue teams. In addition, Finnish staff will serve at the multinational ISAF headquarters in Kabul.

In the context of NATO’s operative planning, Finland has had an opportunity to further its own priorities, such as human rights, women’s position and comprehensive crisis management. The Foreign Affairs Committee of the Finnish Parliament has required that reports on Finland’s participation in crisis management operations include an assessment of the implementation of the comprehensive approach.

Furthering the comprehensive approach has been characteristic of ISAF, for it has been seen as a precondition for reaching operative goals. Effective cooperation and coordination among all international actors involved in stabilisation efforts in Afghanistan is crucial for comprehensive crisis management. ISAF has thus ensured the involvement of NATO Civilian Representatives in the coordination between international players and the Afghan regime in Kabul. The Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) were ISAF’s main form of operation, and their supportive role in the reconstruction work and development projects has helped boost local confidence in ISAF troops.

An intensification of civil-military cooperation at the strategic, operative and tactical levels has been the trend also in the German-led Regional Command North, where Finland has been operating. A reorganisation of operations took place in the Swedish-led PRT, in which Finnish troops used to serve, in order to achieve better coordination between civilian and military support. In 2012–14, the purpose of Finnish participation was to systematically support more effective collaboration between the armed forces and the police and a better rule of law, especially in the provinces of Balkh ja Samangan. During 2013, the activities of the Nordic-Baltic Transition Support Unit (NB TSU) also focused on enhancing collaboration between national authorities and on police mentoring in the Northern Command area.

The CIMIC activities of Finnish troops in Afghanistan have been recently assessed at the Finnish National Defence University also in terms of their contribution to the crisis management mission. The study found that of the greatest benefit for the mission were the
periods when CIMIC activities concentrated on liaising, thus providing the troops with useful information on the Afghan civil society. A case in point is the activity of the Finnish-led CIMIC team in Kabul in the early phases of the operation. The project-centred CIMIC activity in Northern Afghanistan gradually diverged from the support directed at operative action. Since 2012, however, the mission has again focused on liaising and on small-scale project activity to pacify the region.

In accordance with the comprehensive approach, Finland has contributed to funding the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), which is considered more decisive for the country’s future than foreign military presence. In the Wales NATO Summit in 2014, the participating countries renewed their financial commitments to support the ANSF, provided that Afghanistan carries out reforms and proves its ability to assume responsibility over the country’s security as it has promised. At the Chicago NATO Summit in 2012, Finland had pledged to commit an annual €6 million to the ANSF up to 2017, the share of the NATO-managed ANA Trust Fund being €1.5 million and that of the UNDP-managed Law and Order Trust Fund (LOTFA) €4.5 million.

Finland has promoted, through ISAF, the implementation of the goals of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security). The efforts to increase the number of women within the security force have proved very successful: at present women number about 2,700. The appointment of a Brigadier-General as the gender equality adviser of the ISAF Commander in March 2014 has had a positive effect on cooperation with the Afghan Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defence. According to a Finnish-funded report on the implementation of Resolution 1325, the goals regarding women, peace and security have been promoted actively in the Northern Command area, where Finland also has been operating.

Impact of Finnish ISAF participation on Finland’s defence capability development

Finland’s participation in the crisis management operation in Afghanistan has enabled it to develop multifaceted military capabilities that are internationally compatible and meet high quality standards.

Participation in intelligence actions within a broader multinational force structure has provided valuable expertise for the development of national capabilities, and this knowhow can be drawn upon in operational development within the Finnish context. Similarly, taking part in special force operations has improved the competence level of the personnel involved, and their skills can now be capitalised on when training Finnish detachments. Participation in the Nordic-Baltic Transition Support Unit mission has also played a crucial role in the development of the activities of the Finnish infantry company and platoon, and the acquired competences will be put to good use in leadership training in Finland.

Field medicine is one of the main areas showing significant progress thanks to ISAF. Operating in a high-risk area and the medical needs identified have helped improve both medical practices and field medical materials. ISAF has also afforded an excellent occasion to test the functioning of military leadership systems and logistics, and this experience will be
useful for the purposes of Finland’s national defence and when planning new crisis management operations.

The level of achievement in terms of Finland’s national goals for ISAF participation has been subject to study at the Finnish National Defence University. For example, the evaluation for the period 2010–12 showed that cooperation with the Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTACs) and the Improvised Explosive Device Disposal team has enhanced the operational capability and military credibility of the Finnish infantry company. In addition, the experiences gained in handling firearms at the individual level and in standard operating procedures for handling mines have been integrated in the planning of military training in Finland.

**Resolute Support Mission: principles and objectives**

In accordance with the Declaration issued at the Wales NATO Summit in 2014, the action in support of Afghanistan will consist of three phases: In the short term, the Resolute Support Mission (RSM); in the medium term, the financial sustainment of the ANSF; and, in the long term, the NATO-Afghanistan Enduring Partnership. The partner countries have concurred with this Declaration.

The RS Mission is scheduled to start on 1 January 2015 with approximately 12,000 troops. The preparations have lagged behind due to the failure of the incumbent Afghan President Karzai to sign the U.S.-Afghan Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA). Once President Ghani had taken office, however, the BSA and the NATO-Afghan Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) were both signed on 30 September 2014, allowing the preparations for the RS Mission to proceed.

The purpose of the RS Mission is to train, advise and assist the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) at strategic level, support Afghan security structures and ensure the force protection of the RS Mission. The new operation aims at raising the ANSF and Afghan security structures to such a level that they will be able to independently and credibly ensure a stable security situation, respecting the principles of good governance and upholding human rights.

The goals listed in the Operational Plan adopted in June highlight the importance of strengthening the operational stability of the ANSF and its capability to prevent terrorist activity and protect the local population. Training and advisory tasks will be performed at government departments and national institutions; within the military at corps level, and within the police force at regional leadership level.

In addition, the RS Mission is designed to promote the implementation of the objectives enshrined in the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security). The NATO Senior Civilian Representative will pursue his efforts to encourage a wider female representation in the ANSF, help ensure women’s security in service and have them appointed to important posts within the national security organisation.
While the RS Mission will have a more limited territorial coverage than ISAF, it is going to cover – in addition to the RS operations to be based in Kabul – four provincial centres: Mazar-e-Sharif in the North, Herat in the West, Kandahar in the South, and Jalalabad in the East. The intended strength of the mission is approximately 12,000.

The United States will be the most significant participant with a total of 9,800 service members as of 1 January 2015. Their number will be roughly halved in 2016. The USA is likely to stay on in the eastern and western regions until the end of 2015, and from then on only at the Bagram base north of Kabul.

The United States, Italy, Turkey and Germany will act as the framework nations of the mission. Germany will be the framework nation in the Northern Command area, where the majority of the Finnish troops would be deployed. In October 2014, Afghanistan and the North Atlantic Council endorsed the participation of 14 operational partners, including Finland. The decision to launch the RS Mission will be adopted within NATO in late 2014.

**Nature, level of ambition and legal basis of the RSM**

The SOFA Agreement between NATO and Afghanistan makes it clear that Resolute Support is a non-combat operation. On grounds of the challenging operational environment, however, Finland’s participation in the RS Mission must be seen to present a particularly demanding military challenge within the meaning of Section 3 of the Finnish Act on Military Crisis Management (211/2006).

The legal basis for the Resolute Support training, advising and assistance mission is the invitation expressed by Afghanistan: According to the SOFA Agreement, the Parties agree to the presence of NATO forces in Afghanistan. Finland was accepted as an operational partner by Afghanistan in an Exchange of Letters between NATO and Afghanistan in October 2014. The next step will be an agreement between Finland and NATO in the form of an Exchange of Letters on Participation/Financial Arrangements, extending the SOFA Agreement, signed between NATO and Afghanistan, to apply also to Finland as a partner country.

ISAF has been operating in Afghanistan under a mandate based on the UN Security Council Resolution 1386 (Chapter VII of the UN Charter). Under international law, the RS Mission is not subject to a UN Security Council mandate, for it is a training, advising and assistance mission that enjoys the consent of the host country. However, many of the countries planning to participate in the mission consider it politically important to have a UN Security Council Resolution incorporating a Security Council mandate (under Chapter VI of the UN Charter) or an expression of its political support for the mission. Negotiations are ongoing between Security Council members in collaboration with the Afghan government, and an outcome is expected by the end of 2014.

Although the consent of the host country is an adequate legal basis for the RS Mission, Finland is backing the international efforts for UN Security Council support. It was noted in the 2006 government proposal for the Finnish Act on Military Crisis Management (HE 5/2006 vp) that Finland may exceptionally take part in operations involving traditional peace-keeping
activities, provided that they will be carried out with the agreement or at the request of the host country, coercive military measures excluded. In the justifications it was further noted that under international law such operations need not be mandated by the UN Security Council, and that enacting national laws to restrict Finland’s participation in such activity would not be expedient.

The rules of engagement adopted for the RS Mission are similar to those of the other operations involving Finland: they allow the troops to act in self defence, provide protection for their own operations and perform their tasks. Any use of force must be restricted to such forcible measures that are necessitated by the specific task (i.e. advising and training) and they must be in proportion to the mission (the principle of minimum use of force). The powers to be vested in the Commander at a mission location always depend on the situation. ANSF’s own operations will be backed up by Resolute Support capabilities (including aerial support) in extreme cases only, for example, to protect the mission’s mandate or personnel.

The security situation and risk assessment with regard to the RSM

The security situation in Afghanistan is very fragile. Rebel activity has traditionally concentrated in the eastern and southern regions, and this trend is likely to continue. The rebels primarily act by staging attacks against Afghan security authorities with improvised explosive devices and handguns. In population centres, the insurgents tend to make dramatic attacks to show people that the regime is unable to guarantee the security of citizens. Extensive and well-coordinated armed attacks are more likely to occur in the areas from which the international force has withdrawn.

International troops are susceptible to attacks especially in Kabul, and unsystematic attacks may occur whenever the troops are perceived as an easy target. The eventuality of suicide attacks, rocket attacks and multi-modal attacks against international military bases cannot be ruled out.

While the security situation in Northern Afghanistan is relatively stable in comparison with the rest of country, it has been deteriorating steadily. The number of attacks increased five-fold between 2007 and 2013, usually targeting the local security force and local representatives. The growing number of attacks can partly be explained by the increased activity of Afghan security authorities and the larger number of security operations performed. This has been the trend also in 2014.

In the Northern region, rebels are likely to pose a risk neither to troops travelling on main roads, nor to military bases located in urban areas. Roadside bombs and staged ambushes will therefore remain the most serious threats for the Finnish crisis management troop. As the tasks of the Finnish force will be chiefly performed within military bases, travel between NATO bases and Afghan bases by road transport is considered the greatest security risk. In Mazar-e-Sharif, helicopters are used for base-to-base transfers whenever feasible. The personnel serving together with the Afghans will be under threat of internal attacks, which cannot be ruled out because of possible rebel infiltration.
Now that the operation is going to focus on training and advisory duties and the international force will be reduced in the provinces, the support afforded by the military crisis management mission to civilian actors in the field will also diminish. The lower level of support is already a reality in the provinces now that the territorial coverage of the ISAF operation has shrunk as a result of force reductions.

**Finnish participation in the RSM**

Finland’s participation in the training-oriented RS Mission follows the Government Programme guideline under which the focus of Finnish participation will shift towards training, along with development cooperation and civilian crisis management.

Under the Partnership Agreement signed between Finland and Afghanistan in 2013 (Finnish Treaty Series 64/2014), Finland has made a commitment to continue the efforts to build sustainable and professional Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) that act in accordance with the Afghan Constitution and respect international human rights standards. The Agreement further prescribes that the Finnish Government will keep on supporting this process through the international structures developed to this end. The Resolute Support training, advising and assistance mission clearly constitutes such an international structure.

Finland intends to pursue cooperation notably with Germany, the Nordic countries and the Baltic countries, and to deploy troops in Northern Afghanistan and Kabul. Finland has taken part in the the Northern Command area military planning under German leadership. The total demand in troops in the Northern Command area is 1,200, of which Germany will probably contribute about 800. Sweden, who intends to participate in the Mission under German leadership, plans to send a maximum of 50 troops to Afghanistan. The final decision on Sweden’s participation is due in December 2014.

In November 2014, the President of the Republic of Finland and the Cabinet Committee on Foreign and Security Policy took a preliminary decision on Finland’s participation in the RS Mission with about 80 troops. On the basis of that policy principle, Finland has been planning to deploy about 70 soldiers to the German-led Northern Command area, with another 10 to the Kabul area.

In the early phase of the RS Mission, Finnish participation will mainly involve mentoring tasks at the headquarters of the 209th Corps of the Afghan National Army and the special force in Mazar-e-Sharif. Finns will also perform headquarters tasks in Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif, along with support and logistics-related tasks. This participation concept will allow a flexible transition to Kabul-centred operations and an adjustment of the Finnish troop level to meet the mission’s post-2015 operating conditions and needs.

Since the beginning of October 2014, the Finnish ISAF crisis management force has been operating in a composition compatible with the Resolute Support mission. It is now preparing to resume operations under the RSM as of 1 January 2015. Current plans are based on the assumption that operations in the Northern region will terminate by the end of 2015,
circumstances permitting. From then on, all activity would be centralised on Kabul, and a considerable decrease in the size of the Finnish troops is foreseen.

**Cost of Finnish participation**

In 2015, the total cost of military crisis management efforts in Afghanistan is estimated at roughly €17.86 million. Of this sum, €10.25 million will be funded under the main title for the Ministry for Foreign Affairs’ administrative branch, and €7.61 under that of the Ministry of Defence. Participation in the RS Mission will not imply extra spending above the crisis management appropriations already covered by the decision on central government spending limits. The expenditure, calculated on the basis of the latest troop size estimate, is included in the supplement to the Finnish Government’s budget proposal for 2015.

**Goals for Finnish participation**

Finland’s participation in the RSM consists of three pillars: training and advising tasks, the immediate operational support they require (intelligence, force protection, medical care, headquarters tasks), and national support (administration, leadership, logistics, intelligence).

The purpose of the training and advisory efforts is to improve ANSF’s operational stability and to strengthen the special force. The support for advisory tasks will focus on intelligence, force protection and medical care. The current Nordic-Baltic cooperation arrangements for support and logistics will be continued to the extent possible.

The Finnish force is going to perform its training and advisory tasks principally in the Northern region, at the headquarters of the 209th Corps of the Afghan National Army and in the special force. The advisory services provided for the special force will also be backed up by rule of law experts and police advisors, in support of the comprehensive approach. The JTAC capability necessary for the mission will be an integral part of the special force-related activities. Participation in these tasks in the Northern region is due to end by September 2015, and under current plans Finland will from then on principally post headquarters personnel in the Kabul area.

Finland strives to ensure full implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security) during the RSM crisis management operation, a goal it has been advocating ever since the planning phase of the mission. Particular attention will be devoted to equality training, the number of gender equality advisers within command structures, mainstreaming equality into operational planning and evaluation methods, and better reporting mechanisms for equality issues.

Furthermore, Finland’s participation in the multinational RSM has the goal of assisting the development of its own national defence. As described above in connection with ISAF, Finland intends to draw upon the experience gained from operating under demanding conditions in order to improve the skills of its own military personnel and the capabilities of Finnish troops in areas such as leadership, intelligence, special force operations and field medicine.
Consulting the Parliament

Finland has been involved in crisis management in Afghanistan since 2002. Parliament has reviewed Finland’s participation on the basis of successive government White Papers (VNS 5/2001 vp, VNS 2/2007 vp, VNS 8/2008 vp, VNS 1/2010 vp and VNS 2/2011 vp) and other reports. The situation in Afghanistan has also been analysed in biannual crisis management reviews.

The previous White Paper on Afghanistan, endorsed by the Finnish Parliament in 2012 pursuant to a report submitted by the parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee, noted that Finland welcomes the NATO-planned ISAF follow-on mission with a focus on training operations. In line with that report, the Finnish Parliament also pointed out that future White Papers on crisis management situations must be prepared from a comprehensive perspective, and it called for a wide-ranging analysis of the plans concerning possible forms of Finnish participation in the post-2014 ISAF follow-on operation.

In November 2014, the President of the Republic of Finland and the Cabinet Committee on Foreign and Security Policy took a preliminary decision on Finland’s participation in the RS Mission with about 80 troops, requesting that a White Paper be submitted to Parliament. The purpose of this White Paper on Finland’s overall support to Afghanistan is consequently to consult the Parliament in accordance with the Finnish Act on Military Crisis Management. Pursuant to that consultation, the President of the Republic is due to take the final decision on Finland’s participation in the RS Mission by the end of 2014.

An agreement between Finland and NATO on the terms of participation and the financial arrangements will also have to be signed in the course of 2014.

4 Economic relations between Finland and Afghanistan

Afghanistan shows significant economic potential, and a diverse and sustainable economic development will be crucial for its future. New cooperation opportunities will be opening up for Finland in this context.

Trade relations between Finland and Afghanistan are evolving gradually. An Afghan-Finnish Business Council was founded in Mazar-e-Sharif in May 2014. The level of trade between the two countries is still very low, and the trade balance shows a surplus in favour of Afghanistan: In 2013 Afghan imports into Finland amounted to €13 million, while Finnish exports into Afghanistan remained below €2 million. The rise in Finnish exports in 2014, however, resulted in an improved balance of trade. An expansion of the Business Council network will contribute to more intensive commercial ties between the two countries. Finnish knowhow in mineral extraction will also be promoted in Afghanistan through a project involving the Geological Survey of Finland (the GTK).

The Finnish Embassy in Kabul, which is in charge of the “Team Finland” activities in Afghanistan, fosters cooperation with the Finnish Ministry of Employment and the Economy.
and with trade promotion organisations, such as Finpro and Finnpartnership. The mission of Team Finland is to lend support to export promotion and the internationalisation of Finnish businesses, and to encourage networking between Finnish and Afghan companies. Finnish companies have started to show an interest in trading with Afghanistan, although they are still worried about the local security situation, business environment and infrastructure. Trade relations between the two countries can be reinforced through Team Finland efforts, and there is significant potential in the longer run.

Furthermore, the over 3,000 people of Afghan origin who currently live in Finland can be counted as a major resource for the further development of Finno-Afghan relations in the spheres of economy and trade and also more generally.

The Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs has undertaken preparations for bilateral investment protection and taxation agreements between Finland and Afghanistan. Afghanistan’s probable WTO-membership will open up new opportunities for enhanced trade and investments in the coming years.

5 Coordination of Finland’s national support activities

The coordination of Finland’s support activities in Afghanistan is receiving a lot of attention. Cooperation between the different branches of administration is close and effortless and it is based on a comprehensive approach, in support of Finland’s policy towards Afghanistan. The implementation of this White Paper will be coordinated in inter-administration meetings chaired by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, with the participation of, for instance, the Ministry of Defence, the Defence Command, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice.