Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, I think we’ll begin please. Can I begin by saying it’s an enormous pleasure for Chatham House to welcome on my left, His Excellency Dr Abdullah Abdullah, the Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, and on my right, His Excellency Engineer Habibullah Qaderi, the Counter-narcotics Minister of Afghanistan. A quick word on the procedure for the meeting: the Foreign Minister will speak first followed by the Counter-narcotics Minister, we’ll then throw the meeting open to questions. Questions will, should first be directed to the Foreign Minister please, because the Foreign Minister has to go at about quarter past two to go and meet one Dr Condoleezza Rice. We’ll then have questions please to the Counter-narcotics Minister for the remainder of the meeting, winding up by half past two.

The meeting, ladies and gentlemen, is entirely on the record. The comments by our two speakers and the questions afterwards are on the record and a couple of other very quick administrative points: can you please all make sure, as I’m about to, that you switch off your mobile phone, and please really do switch it off, don’t just leave it on quiet, buzz or whatever it’s called because it does actually interfere with the sound system? And I have also to – I think this must be a European Union rule that requires me to point out to you in my best air stewardess manner that that is the emergency exit over in the corner and if we need to use it there’ll be an alarm going off, and you’ll tell what’s happening because about 300 people will be trying to squeeze through it (laughter).
Chair: Exactly. You, you do, Minister (laughter). An immense pleasure to welcome them first. Can I just introduce them properly? On my left, His Excellency Dr Abdullah Abdullah, is a Tajik, was educated in Afghanistan and qualified as an eye surgeon. He joined Jamiat-e Islami as a mujahidin activist in the early 1980s. He became a close advisor to and spokesman for Ahmad Shah Massoud, running an effective propaganda campaign on behalf of the Northern Alliance by ferrying diplomats and journalists into the Panjshir Valley to meet Massoud, and captured Pakistani Taliban. He developed a role in the political and foreign affairs field, and became deputy and then full foreign affairs spokesman for the Northern Alliance in 1999. The death of Massoud and the post 11 September crisis rapidly raised his profile. Dr Abdullah was appointed minister for foreign affairs in the interim administration, inaugurated on the 22nd December 2001, and was then appointed minister for foreign affairs in the transitional administration following the emergency Loya Jirga in June 2002. He was reinducted into the Afghan cabinet in December 2004 following the presidential elections.

Well, now let's introduce His Excellency Engineer Habibullah Qaderi, who was appointed Afghanistan’s Minister of Counter-narcotics in December 2004. After just eight months in post, Minister Qaderi has recently overseen a 21 percent reduction in poppy cultivation in Afghanistan over the past year. He has worked for a period of 12 years with UNHCR, and was a lecturer at the Nebraska Project where he was in charge of administering the teaching of English as a foreign language test, and he’s also served as an engineer in Pakistan. From 2002 to 2004 he served as the chief advisor of the Afghan Ministry of Refugees Affairs and was a member of the tripartite commission on Afghanistan and he’s also served finally, as director of the Councils of Advisory Groups for Returnees and Displaced People.

We have two excellent speakers, I'm sure you'll agree, and I'd like to hand over straightaway now to the Foreign Minister. Sir, thank you (applause).

Speaker 1: Thank you very much and good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. The introduction, when it says that, “To my left” it doesn't say about our political (laughter) position and anything like it, it’s just by chance or, “To the right.” And it’s a great pleasure for me to be able to attend this meeting and talk about Afghanistan. Just a little bit of correction with your permission, Mr Chairman, on the other aspect of introductions. First of all, I consider myself Afghan before
anything else. So, that’s Afghanistan and Afghans as a nation but then when you get into the details of it which is always referred to, the point of correction was needed. So, my father came from Kandahar which is Pashtun, it was Pashtun, in a Pashtun majority area, and my mother came from Panjshir which is north of Kabul and mainly Tajik.

As, like the irony of the events, when the resistance was all over Afghanistan, in all parts of the country during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and later on, but during the course of events, this ethnic aspect of it was highlighted more than other aspects of it. During Taliban there was a national resistance against the Taliban and during the Soviets in the same way, in the same manner, but the fact that by chance Mullah Omar was happened to be from Kandahar, that doesn’t suggest that he had the backing of the people from that part of the country.

But anyway I am happy to be here. Why I am happy? Four years ago, this date, I think today it coincides the Tokyo Conference, a month before that there was – or a month and a half before that there was the Bonn Conference and before Bonn Conference, Afghanistan happened to be in the middle of darkness, in the depth of darkness, with the slightest hopes for the future or any future. 90 percent of Afghanistan was captured by the Taliban and al-Qaeda, direct ruler al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, and he had turned it into its global capital while thousands of terrorists all over the world used to go there to Afghanistan, get their training and then being sent back either to their own countries or fighting against the people of Afghanistan. So, that was such an imminent threat, not only against the people of Afghanistan but against global peace which as a consequences we had the tragic events which we all know about that.

It was only after those tragic events that an opportunity emerged for Afghanistan. An opportunity in two ways: for the people of Afghanistan to get together, for the international community to support Afghanistan. So, the Bonn talks started, there was an agreement as a result of that. There was a document signed by the representatives of Afghanistan and endorsed by the United Nations and the international community called Bonn Agreement and then there was a broad reference to the process, to the political process, to the security and the stabilisation process, and to the development and reconstruction process in Afghanistan as well as governance, and rule of law and human rights in all areas that you can imagine but it was a single document agreed upon far away from Afghanistan. Look at the impact, where are we are today.
With all the challenges that I will come to it towards the end of my statement, Afghanistan has been a successful story. It has been a successful story by all accounts. Put it in the context of where it was that before that and look into the process how it evolved: today we have a constitution, today we have elected president, today we have elected parliament. While hundreds of thousands of people were migrating from Afghanistan before 2001, three and a half million refugees have returned back to their country in the course of past four years. 22nd March 2002, we called it — that’s the beginning of our year — we called it — our new year — we called it back to school day. There was the idea of getting students back to school, that was an idea, boys and girls; today six million students are going to school out of which 35 percent are girls.

I remember very well, perhaps this date, 2002 or tomorrow, in Tokyo, that we were talking about security while Osama bin Laden was still in Tora Bora, eastern part of Afghanistan. There was the idea of DDR: demobilisation, demilitarisation and deintegration, but that was just an idea. There has to be DDR. What was the actual situation? 20,000 forces in western Afghanistan, one group; 15,000 in northern Afghanistan; another 20,000 in north-eastern Afghanistan and then small-size or big-size armies in other parts of the country. So, we talked in the sideline of Tokyo Conference about the idea of DDR then again, about the national army, national police force in institutional capacity building. It was just an idea, it wasn’t in the actual meeting, in the actual Tokyo Conference, it was in the sideline of it. We discussed these ideas and today over 60,000 people have been demobilised in that country, the national army. Over 30,000 people have been trained and the same applies to the police force and if you take any aspect of the process you will find a successful story.

You’re aware of our relations with our neighbouring countries. Perhaps you can imagine what would have been the relations with our neighbouring countries at that time. We signed Kabul Declaration with Neighbourly Relations Declaration with all our neighbouring countries. Just recently there was Regional and Economic Cooperation Conference in Kabul and if you take all aspects of relations with our neighbouring countries you will see a positive development, a positive trend, increasingly positive trend in our relations with our neighbouring countries.

So, does that mean by having to referred to the parts of the developments in the last four years, that the job is done? Congratulations? Self-congratulating or congratulating our friends? No. The purpose is different. Why I am referring to
the events of the past four years, it is because that we all did it. It was the international community, it was the Afghans in the state of Afghanistan, the people of Afghanistan who made it possible to change the situation from where we were in 2001, and before that, and to turn the course of, to change the course of history in Afghanistan which in much, in a lot of dimensions it was a change of course of history in global scale. It was because of the resolve and determination of the Afghan people and the support from the international community. So, I would like to thank the international community by taking this opportunity for their support.

But what are the challenges? I’m not intending to disappoint anybody but I may say that the challenges are as big as it used to be. Just a few examples. Six million students going to school, what about the quality of education? What about the schools themselves? How long it will take that we can call tents as schools? In the warmest areas of the country and in the coldest parts of the territory, tents are used as schools, while we have proper schools as well in parts of the country. So, whatever I have referred to in the past few minutes, if you ask me about it I will elaborate on the challenges that it poses to Afghanistan.

While London Conference tomorrow and the day after tomorrow is an end to a process, in the political process. The Bonn Agreement came to a conclusion with the parliamentary elections in Afghanistan. While in developmental phase we might be, still we have humanitarian situation in parts of Afghanistan or as far as reintegration of refugees are concerned and in and other areas as well but, I can call it a transition, a slow – the beginning of a transition from emergency in humanitarian phase to developmental phase as far as social and economic development is concerned and as far as the governance and rule of law is concerned, we are in quite a different position and different situation. So, in London here tomorrow in the conference two important documents will be discussed. One is Afghanistan’s Compact – and please remind me about the time so I do not [unclear 15.22].

Chair: We’re fine.

Speaker 1: We are fine. Okay. The Afghanistan’s Compact. We hope that this will get the endorsement from the international community. It addresses all areas of the process like security, stabilisation of Afghanistan, social and economic development, governance and rule of law and the issue of narcotics and our efforts in that respect in counternarcotics effort as a cross-cutting issue. Then it has timelines; we are bound ourselves together with our partners among the
international community on timelines which might seem a little bit ambitious but I think that's how we should do it and we should make every effort to get to those timelines. In the past four years our record has been good; a little bit a few ups and downs but altogether you can call it a positive record.

Then we have another annex on the aid effectiveness which is a very important issue. In this respect I think one of the main issues will be to how to increase the Afghan ownership, that's a demand from Afghanistan as far as implementation of assistances to Afghanistan is concerned. We are not naive and we understand it. If we didn't know it four years ago we have a little bit knowledge of the system today, but I think it will be in the best interests of the tax payers and the donors community as well as Afghanistan as a recipient if the parallel to institutional capacity building in the government more and more assistances are channelled through the core budget. Of course, we are grateful for the services of the NGOs which will be needed for long time to come in their part of the helping society, in civil society. It's not rejection of the good work that NGOs have been doing in Afghanistan or the important role which international organisation has been playing in Afghanistan but I think it will compliment everybody's effort if we get that.

Then, there is also another annex on coordination in monitoring of the assistances to Afghanistan which the United Nations will have an important role in coordinating the efforts with the international community in Afghanistan in the other side. At the same time for the first time we are presenting Afghanistan's National Developmental Strategy which we call it interim because it is a document which will be — which we call it a living document and hopefully in one or two years time it will turn into the full national development strategy. This also will be presented while the framework is in the Compact, that's a more detailed document.

So, in London we hope that the contact between Afghanistan and the international community, which was started in Bonn and technically it comes to an end with the election of our parliament, is renewed in a different phase, in different circumstances and based our joint experience and it will give us, it will work as a blueprint for the framework of cooperation between Afghanistan and the international community in the coming five years. So, that's the timeline that is envisioned in the Compact. While some of the programmes like our MDGs, Millennium Development Goals, and programmes which comes under that, that's a longer-term goals and objectives. We hope that we will have the continued
support from the international community and we call it building on success. Building on success should get us to a point where Afghanistan will be able to stand on its own feet in different fields of life. So, if my sort of estimate is right, 15 minutes is over and now –

Chair: Perfect.

Speaker 1: it’s time for Minister Qaderi and thank you for your attention.

Chair: Thank you very much (applause). Minister, could you (unclear 20.25)?

Speaker 2: Thank you Dr Cornish. Hello everybody, members of the Chatham House, Dr Abdullah, ladies and gentlemen. I will not go into full details because my colleague and senior minister, Dr Abdullah, has already talked about main issues, why we are here – excuse me – in London. I would concentrate mostly on the narcotic issues, why we are here and why I am here.

As you all may be aware that UK has announced that they’re going to have around 3,000 troops in Helmand. I think in a way it’s a good news for the Afghan people that the international community wants to assist Afghanistan. The other important issue that from 70 to 90 percent of the heroin used in the UK comes from Afghanistan and I think it’s a serious threat. Therefore, I’m here to launch the counternarcotics strategy for Afghanistan here and to tell the world that to implement the strategy we need to have a trust fund, and a trust fund has been established.

The strategy has got eight pillars and four priorities. Again, I would not go into full details. I will talk about the three priorities which is often trust to this audience. The first one is the destruction of trafficking in Afghanistan or, I should say, the destruction of the narcotics trade in Afghanistan. The second is the institution-building and the third is the assistance, assisting the Afghan farmer. Under narcotics trafficking I should mention or give an example of Helmand, that is the province where the UK will be sending their troops. Helmand, it’s a province where almost 35 percent of the Afghan drug trafficking happens through that route. It’s bordering Iran and Pakistan.

The second area that I would like to mention is the institution-building. Engineer Daoud, who has been recently appointed as the governor of Helmand, I know once when he arrived in Helmand he did not have trained police, either the
border-trained police, the normal law enforcement police or the counternarcotics police. He did not have either of these. He does not have equipment, therefore, we need to do capacity-building and institutional-building in Afghanistan which is the second area or the second priority of our strategy.

The third one is the assistance to the farmers. We must assist the farmers in Afghanistan. I would like to give again example of Helmand. Less than five percent of people in Helmand has got electricity and you all know that agriculture would not be possible without electricity and the agriculture cost goes up if you don’t have electricity by using diesel which comes from other countries. The other example is the roads; we don’t have good roads or in certain cases we do not have any roads in some parts of Afghanistan. Helmand, I again give example because it is, it’s important to this audience. They do have very good watermelons in Helmand and I’m sure by the time the watermelons arrive from the farm to market, there will be only water and no melons (laughter). So, we need to assist Afghanistan in these areas.

I would not again take longer time on the strategy, I would come to the second point that is the trust fund. In order to implement our strategy we need assistance, we need the assistance of international community to put money into the Counternarcotics Trust Fund. The Counternarcotics Trust Fund, again, has got three main principle. The first one is the responsibility, as Dr Abdullah earlier mentioned that we have now, we have had the election on 18th September for the parliament and it is established. I think the government of Afghanistan is responsible especially the president, myself and Engineer Daoud, who is the governor of Helmand, to the people of Afghanistan to solve the problem of narcotics.

The second is the credibility; since the trust fund is being administered by UNDP and it has been, it’s going to be controlled by the international community because we do have a management board where we will have the members from the international community. The last principle is that the Afghan ownership; the Afghans must own the programmes and implement it in Afghanistan and that is the time where the credibility of the Afghan government increases or enhances once they spend the money themselves. So, we need the trust fund in order to assist the Afghan people that they do not grow poppy, or they do not do the trafficking. Therefore, you all should trust the trust fund (laughter).

I think the time period will not allow me to speak anymore. We would rather give
more time to the question and answer session. Thank you very much (applause).

Chair: So, ladies and gentlemen, we have a little bit over 15 minutes to address questions in the first place please to the foreign minister and then for the later part to the counternarcotics minister. Could I ask you please when asking a question to identify yourself and any institutional affiliation you might have or want, perhaps but could I also ask you to keep your questions quite short. This isn’t really a moment for major statements on policy, please. Go ahead.

Question and Answers

Participant: Sean Curtin, Chatham House member. As the first questioner I’d like to thank you very much Dr Abdullah and Minister for your speeches. I’d like to ask you a question: you mentioned in your talk about Tokyo and your relations with Japan. Can I ask you? You were one of the small number of countries, your government last July, to support Japan’s United Nations security council bid with the other G4 members. In fact, your Afghanistan was the only country in the entire Asian region to actually support it. Why did you take such a unique original approach and did it have anything to do with the generous amounts of foreign aid that Japan has given your government? Thank you.

Speaker 1: In fact, we did it otherwise, we based on the request from Japan and Germany and other friends of Afghanistan. Japan has been one of the major donors to Afghanistan and Tokyo Conference was the main international donors’ conference after the Bonn Agreement and they asked us to support their bid. Not only we did support their efforts but we cosponsored the resolution, G4 resolution, if that’s the question? We cosponsored the resolution put forward by the G4 so that was the small thing that we were capable of doing which we didn’t hesitate. Okay? 30 mins

Chair: Over here.

Participant: Bill Neely from ITN, British television and a Chatham House member. You began by saying that Afghanistan is a success story by any measure. How then are we to see how you advice us to view the growing insurgency in your country including multiple suicide bombings recently as well as a booming heroin trade, and the continuing need and indeed perhaps the growing need for foreign troops in a land where you yourself as well as other ministers are not really free to roam at liberty? How should we see those three things in the context of what you call a success story by any measure?
Speaker 1: Yes. In all aspects I would give you the evidences and the proof of success, security. While we had to continue our efforts against terrorism and eliminate bases of terrorists which were inside Afghanistan, at the same time we had to disarm the forces which were there and reintegrate them into society. Can you imagine security in an environment where in a country there are four, five, ten, small size, big size, very big size armies? So, it is a developed, it is a progress in the stabilisation of the country, at the same time the bases of al-Qaeda and Taliban had been removed from Afghanistan. Two years ago they used to hold areas under their control in parts of the country and resist there. Later on, they changed their tactics they used to attack the convoys, military convoys or the bases of our national army of coalition forces or international forces as a whole. Today they are targeting civilians. Yes, it is not satisfactory; it's why we are asking the international community to stay with Afghanistan, to consolidate their achievements which are for all of us in the past four years further. That's the call.

As I mentioned at the beginning, it is not job done in Afghanistan. Progress, significant progress has been made. Take the political process: the same thing applies. In a country with all its challenges, it was mentioned earlier by Minister Qaderi might have spoken about it but also in the introduction, that we had 21 percent reduction in the land, poppy cultivated land. In itself, it is a progress; it is a global challenge, it's every country faced with one of the challenges, just one of the challenges, for example, just narcotics, look at that the experience of other countries. What we are trying to do is to make that period, that time period shorter, as short as possible. We don't have that much time and we are in a hurry to deal with the issue of narcotics as soon as possible.

Is it possible without the continuation of support from our partners, the presence of the international forces in Afghanistan? Of course, it is needed. Not only for the overall stability of the country but they're also helping us in training of our own national army, our own national police force and other security institutions. It is in that spirit in continuation of this spirit of cooperation that we are hoping that Afghanistan will be able to stand on its own feet in some years to come.

Out of a situation there, you can have a very blurred perception, you can have a very white perception, you can have a very dark perception, but what I am trying to explain about the realities of Afghanistan: while a lot has been achieved together, we need to stay together in order to consolidate those achievements and get where everybody is satisfied, the people of Afghanistan and the
international community, Afghanistan is not becoming once again a threat or a place for threat against its own people or the rest of the world.

Chair: Next question down here. Sorry it's a – yes, at the front. I beg your pardon and that will be the next one, this gentleman. Thank you.

Participant: Sajjad Khan, editor “New Civilisation” magazine and Chatham House member. Can I ask the foreign minister, is there a danger that you become almost over-dependent on the international community, and that actually creates a complacent attitude within Afghanistan and slows down movement towards self-sufficiency? You mentioned for example, that the NGOs control a lot of the external aid that comes into Afghanistan, you've got the presence of 30,000 plus foreign troops who obviously don't take their orders from the Afghanistan government, isn't there a danger that five, ten years you will still see foreign troops there, still see vast amounts of aid coming from abroad and that Afghanistan will not have created its own institutions, its own foreign policy, its own domestic policy.

Speaker 1: In the document Afghanistan’s Compact, the main emphasis is on the partnership and on the increasing Afghan ownership in the process. So, that's the main spirit of the whole document. But we also have the background; when we went to Tokyo Conference – I don't know if any of our colleagues which were present there from the Afghan delegation are here or not, which perhaps not – we didn’t know, we just knew that we were going to Tokyo and the United Nations, and World Bank, and international financial institutions and the donor partners they had worked out the whole thing in that conference. So, in a sense it was the easiest attendance in any conference which I have attended in the past four years because we had just prepared our speech.

So, it started from there. It started from below zero. If you take the budget, the assistance which is going through the core budget, it's now, it has reached up to 25 percent, nearly 25 percent. So, that situation has changed. It is our desire and it's also envisioned in our National Development Strategy and it's our hope the international community will endorse it, that in all fields of life the capacity, the institutional capacity Afghans are being helped, Afghanistan is being helped to build that capacity necessary to increase the ownership as we move along. That will not be a satisfactory situation neither for the Afghans nor will it serve the interests of the international community if we remain in a situation that we are not standing on our own feet gradually, but it takes time certainly.
Chair: Next question is over here, then I have three questions on this side of the hall for a completely different perspective.

Participant: [Unclear 38.00], EurasiaNet. Mr Minister, past conferences on Afghanistan have produced more words and documents than deeds. What needs, in your way, what needs to have happened in the end of the day, tomorrow, for you to call the London Conference a success?

Speaker 1: I would be unfair if I referred to the conferences, donors’ conferences on Afghanistan, or international conferences on Afghanistan as just mere words. I mentioned that in Bonn Agreement there was, I think it was, five page document, the whole Bonn Agreement. So, it had said Afghanistan should go, should opt for elections. So, the rest has happened all with the support of the international community. So, to be fair to everybody the international community has stood by Afghanistan and our hope is that as a result of this conference they give us once again this assurance and reassures the Afghan people that they will stand by us in the coming years and at the same time it is obligations, this Afghanistan’s Compact, the document, which will be published after the endorsement by the London participants of the London Conference, it shows obligation on both sides and we have a stake in whatever we claim in that document in their [unclear 39.34] for the international community so it is a joint activity in a true partnership that we hope will be endorsed.

Participant: [Unclear 39.52], commentator. Just a spin on the last question, do you actually see more need for NATO troops, more commitments in order to speed up the ability of Afghanistan government to be able to stand on its own feet rather than dragging on as the gentleman mentioned?

Speaker 1: I think what we need is the continuation of support. It’s the understanding of the need for the continued support to Afghanistan for some years to come. But when it comes to the number into the technical aspects of it, it’s rather than the numbers of the forces, it is the main issue of supporting and working together with Afghanistan and supporting the efforts of Afghanistan in a stabilisation of the country. There have been talks about in some capitals and in fact, this morning I was in Netherlands and I talked to the foreign affairs and defence affairs committee, there are debates about it. Of course the government, Netherlands government has decided to send troops but the parliament they have questions about it. It’s good that these debates are underway but signs of hesitation will not help anybody; and we haven’t seen it and I think a successful conference
tomorrow – the success of the conference you can judge it by a few indications. Myself having participated in too many conferences on Afghanistan and otherwise the – who participates there, what is the level of participation, what are the commitment? So, this Afghanistan’s document, the endorsement of this document, it puts a lot of responsibility on Afghans, we have volunteered for that. But at the same time a lot of responsibilities and obligations on the international community. Should we have it endorsed, it will be a successful conference.

Chair: Thank you. Next question. This end, sorry.

Participant: Thank you. My name is William Crawley. I’m a member of Chatham House. I’d like to take up a point the foreign minister about the NGOs and their role in the development of Afghanistan. Your message seems to be following up that of President Karzai reported over the weekend, that NGOs should draw into the background and governments in particular should give more aid to governments. My question is with all the priorities of governments with security and nation building do you have the capacity to take over the sort of front line development efforts in the remote areas that some of the NGOs are involved in often with the full participation of a lively, professional and Afghan civil society or, are you saying that these priorities should give way to government priorities?

Speaker 1: No, I think the, if you look at the context of what the president said it is exactly what I explained earlier. The service of the NGOs will be needed but the NGOs also should work in their code of conduct, should be according to the laws which we have developed with the engagement of NGOs in the international community as a whole which is with just a little bit of regulation. It’s a little bit of preventing a sort of anarchy if I may call it and then, there have been NGOs which they have just the name NGO but it is free enterprise. It’s nothing to do with NGOs’ code of conduct. So, those should be stopped and those who are working effectively in the areas that the government cannot provide the services that they do, their service will be needed for years to come. So, there isn’t a sort of black and white call on that, on that issue. It is to regulate those who are providing the right services and to take those who are misusing the name NGO and work in partnership again and based on the priorities of Afghanistan. Those priorities are the priorities of the people, those are the priorities in the National Development Strategy. Part of it of course, there is a role in every society for NGOs especially in this stage of development in Afghanistan for Afghanistan.

Chair: I think we have time for one more very short question. I’m afraid, and – yes, you
Participant: Thank you Prime Minister, for outlining — sorry, Lara Griffith, member of the Institute. Thank you for outlining the main elements of the new Compact. Could you comment specifically on any goals and timelines that might have been set to improve the situation of women and protect their rights, bearing in mind that there are still some great difficulties particularly in the south of the country.

Speaker 1: Yes, there is a broad commitment from Afghanistan side that in all developmental programmes, the gender issue should be considered and empowerment of women should be taken into account. So, that's in every programme, it's not just in the areas of governance but in security, in social and economical development, in all cross-cutting issues reacted to that. While in the political process we have certain goals, for example, the quota in the parliament and so on and so forth, in the rest of it in the whole National Development Strategy, the agenda in empowerment of women provides the main spirit of the efforts. So, rather than giving numbers which will be, which might not be possible, it is the core of the whole development, it is the understanding of the fact that without empowerment, and full empowerment of half or more than half of the society, Afghanistan cannot develop. So, that's not just the view of the people in the government, that understanding fortunately is there among the people, ordinary people and while 40 years ago, taking boys to the schools was a challenge for the authorities, today in every meeting that the president has or we have with the people who represented themselves the people, the main emphasis on for education for boys and girls, for health services as well as the rights, and that's not the effort by the government alone, by the civil society, free media is helping us and women themselves are actively participating.

Chair: Minister, sadly you need to go. Thank you very much indeed for coming. It's been a privilege to have you here and (applause) — a privilege to have you here and I hope in some small way that our meeting here today has helped to raise the level of debate and perhaps even to begin feeling our way towards some sense of what the international community needs to do for Afghanistan. Thank you very much indeed.

Speaker 1: Thank you very much. Thank you (applause).

Speaker 2: Good luck (laughter).
Chair: So, ladies and gentlemen, we now switch to the subject of counternarcotics and
Minister Qaderi is very happy to take your questions. Humphry.

Participant: Humphry Crum-Ewing, member of Chatham House. We know that the United
Kingdom is going to deploy armed forces in the number of 3,000 in the Helmand
province and we are told that that province is the main centre for opium growth in
Afghanistan. It would be very interesting to know from you, looked at from the
Afghan point of view, precisely what you hope our British armed forces will be
able to do while they are deployed in Helmand to help you.

Speaker 2: Thank you. I think first of all, psychologically it is helps the Afghan government,
the Afghan people when the British troops are in Helmand, but what they exactly
should do is again coming back to the same question: the capacity-building of the
Afghan government is the key; they must train the Afghan police, they must
provide the equipment to the Afghan police, they must provide all kind of support
to the Afghan institutions in Helmand.

In order to sustain changes on the narcotic issue, in that area I think assistance is
the key, we must assist the Afghan farmers. As I mentioned, if you don’t assist,
we can force the Afghan farmer to stop growing poppy but it will not be
sustainable. We must assist them and there is a clear framework that the first
thing is development of a agriculture, the infrastructure, roads,
electricity, irrigation system, I think these are very, very important that the British
troop or the UK should do in Helmand.

Chair: Second question just down here, yes.

Participant: [Unclear 49.54]. As a related question, what actual practical means in the budget
of dealing with this problem? I know for certain one year when the poppy crop
was actually bought from the farmers, next year they planted more so they can
get more money. If you use it as a means of burning the crop itself then you leave
them with no means of living. So, what’s the budget, what actually are practical
means of changing the crop?

Speaker 2: I think we have a strategy, as I earlier mentioned, and the strategy has got eight
pillars, means we have to do eight different things. We have to try to stop the
trafficking, we have to eradicate the poppy fields, we must assist the Afghan
farmers, we must have good criminal justice system whereby we can prosecute
and convict the criminals, we must have very good information system in
Afghanistan to tell the Afghan people that according to article seven of the constitution, poppy growing, using of the narcotics and trafficking is banned. We have to tell the Afghan people that it has got so many hazards, health hazards, social hazards, et cetera. We have to have the demand reduction in Afghanistan, treat the drug addicts. We should have the regional cooperation, we must have the assistance as I mentioned earlier. For the assistance we have a framework as I mentioned, which I continuously mention, there is a framework: development of agriculture all over Afghanistan, infrastructure, roads, electricity, and irrigation system and certainly the credit we are talking, the Afghan farmer should get credit so that they can get extra income for themselves but we don’t tie the elimination of poppy or the eradication of poppy to assistance because the constitution clearly says and there is no condition to that.

**Participant:** [And presented? 52.03] in the budget, [unclear 52.06] programme?

**Speaker 2:** I think we are talking about a five-year strategy; our strategy will be five years. For the time being of course, it’s just an approximate figure, we are talking about two billion dollars.

**Chair:** That’s two billion over five years?

**Speaker 2:** Yes.

**Chair:** Next question just here, yes.

**Participant:** Peter Graff from Reuters. You mentioned in your opening statement the three priorities, you talked about interdiction, you talked about capacity building and you talked about alternative livelihoods for farmers but of course the fourth priority and the one you didn’t mention is eradication. Everybody says there’s been, you can point to successes in interdiction, narcotics seized, you can point to successes in capacity-building slow but steady progress in that and in alternative livelihoods but from what I understand, eradication hasn’t quite been such a success. Can you speak more about that? About efforts to improve eradication of crops and plans to, sort of, turn that around?

**Speaker 2:** Eradication is not our fourth priority, for your information. The fourth priority was to treat the drug addicts, to reduce the demand reduction. But of course, out of the eight pillars of the strategy, eradication is one of that. We have to have eradication in Afghanistan. The reason being that we have examples that in the
past that 2003-2004 we had 67 percent of the increase in cultivation. We must contain plantation of poppy in Afghanistan. This is not the only way we want to get rid of the poppy, it's one of the strategies and we must do eradication and contain. I know in the past we have had some problems, of course, there are certain reasons, we have been late, we have been not very good informing the farmers. This year we were much better and I hope and, to a greater extent, sure that we will have eradication, strong eradication this year in Afghanistan.

Chair: Question right at the back of the hall, yes.

Participant: Hannah Strange, United Press International. Thank you. The governor of Helmand was recently dismissed for his involvement in the poppy trade and a ministry of defence report last week said that that the narcotics trade still permeates the Afghan government and authorities to high levels in terms of involvement or tolerance perhaps. What do you consider to be the extent of the problem and what are you doing to tackle that?

Speaker 2: I think let me correct you that the governor of Helmand was not removed, you know, he is now a senator in Afghanistan. I think more or less he was not able to solve the problem or tackle the narcotics, that's why he was removed. I'm coming back to the same thing that as I mentioned the strategy; we have to everything, interdiction, we have to do stopping the – we have to assist the farmers, all these things have to go together and certainly for that we need the money as I mentioned the trust find earlier, and only and only it will be possible if we have the money to do the institution-building, to do the assistance to the farmers, and in the meantime certainly to do the treatment of drug addicts in the country.

Chair: Thank you. Next question here, yes.

Participant: David Harrison, I'm a freelance journalist. Could I ask you talking about Helmand province, where does the opium go and are you going to ask the British soldiers that stop the movement of it around the province?

Speaker 2: I think we all know that the opium and the heroin are going outside of Afghanistan through borders that's Iran and Pakistan but we will not ask the UK to stop, but we would ask the UK to train the Afghan police to stop it. I think as earlier mentioned we need the UK to train the Afghan police force, provide equipment, and I think they will be able to do, of course, the support of the international community is needed.
Chair: So, you don’t see, if I might interrupt, an immediate role for the British army or NATO troops to actually be interdicting and cutting off supply lines or putting up road blocks or anything else? That’s not the point in your point of view?

Speaker 2: I’m talking about the future. We must train the Afghan people in any case.

Chair: Just around the corner from you, yes. Just there. Just behind you. Just behind you (laughter).

Participant: John Birch, member of Chatham House. You mentioned the need for international regional cooperation. You said much of the drugs go out through Pakistan and Iran. We have a problem with Iran at the moment over their nuclear intentions. You have a common language, in many respects a common culture with Iran, could you tell us what it’s like trying to deal with the government in Tehran or just dealing with your Persian neighbours? Thank you.

Speaker 2: I think it’s a problem of Iran as you’re aware or maybe have heard that Iran has got three million drug addicts. Iran is suffering and we have recently surveyed in Afghanistan that about one million, that’s 920,000 people in Afghanistan are addicted to drug. So, it’s a problem on the both side. And I think there is a commitment and will on both side to solve the problem.

Chair: We have time for two more questions. This lady here in white and then Lyse.

Participant: [Unclear 58.11] from Chatham House member. Actually my question is very similar to the previous one and I was going to ask have you been reaching an agreement with the Iranian government regarding the reduction of this traffic through Iran?

Speaker 2: Yes, I think we do have a commission whereby Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan and we have the US and the UK in that commission, there has been a series of meeting between these partners and there has been a little progress I think but it’s not enough. We have to do much more than that.

Participant: Lyse Doucet at the BBC and also Chatham House Council. Minister Qaderi, I just want to pick up on the question that was brought up by the correspondent from UPI. There are persistent reports of very high-level involvement in the Afghan government including governors in the provinces involved in the narcotics trade.
The Afghan president has sometimes spoken of putting some people on trial. Where are you now in terms of those pillars, a justice system that can actually make sure people are detained and put on trial? Because I know Britain and Italy have been involved in projects to fast-track judges, to train them for these specific kinds of crimes. Thank you.

Speaker 2: Yes, thank you. We do have the criminal justice task who are being trained in Afghanistan where we have trained investigators, judges, prosecutors and a special tribunal has been established whereby more than two kilogram of heroin cases would go to those tribunals and certainly, whenever we find evidence against high officials of the government they would be prosecuted too.

Chair: Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, we’ve come to an end, and I’d like on your behalf to thank Minister Qaderi very much for coming here today and giving us of his time. It does seem to me that you in your ministry do have an immensely complex and important challenge on your plate internationally, regionally, nationally, and of course locally in terms of persuading the Afghan farmer to switch his primary activity from something which might not be as lucrative – into something which might not be as lucrative, I should say. So, once again, thank you very much for coming, it’s been a privilege to have you and we wish you all the very best of luck in your important task. Thank you (applause).

[Recording ends]