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BACKGROUNDER: ISAF SUPPORT TO REINTEGRATION AND RECONCILIATION

In his inaugural speech President Karzai singled out reconciliation as one of the key priorities for his Government. NATO-ISAF share his emphasis and agree that, in parallel to existing efforts on security, governance and development, efforts to find a political solution must also be strengthened.

Reconciliation and re-integration are two key elements of these efforts and they represent an essential component of a successful ISAF campaign to overcome the insurgency.

To reflect this, the Foreign Ministers of ISAF Troop Contributing nations agreed today on the main principles that should guide the way ahead for ISAF efforts in this effort. This guidance will be reviewed once the new Afghan Government has agreed on a policy framework and identified clear requirements from ISAF.

Guiding principles

- Reconciliation and re-integration are separate processes, which must be pursued in a complementary fashion. Both processes must remain Afghan and civilian-owned and led.
- Reconciliation refers to high level strategic political dialogue with senior leaders of major insurgent groups, designed to terminate their armed campaign against the Afghan people and their government.
- Reintegration refers to efforts at the tactical and operational levels to persuade low-level fighters, commanders and shadow governors to lay down their arms and to assimilate peacefully into Afghan society.
- ISAF shall coordinate its supporting efforts closely with the Afghan Government and other actors, mainly UNAMA and donor countries.
- The bulk of ISAF efforts will focus on reintegration both in supporting the Afghan Government in developing a policy framework, an implementation strategy and specific programmes, and on the ground where ISAF is often on the frontline. However, on request of the Afghan Government, ISAF may have a role to play in supporting reconciliation efforts as well.

ISAF Posture

- In practical terms and in response to a renewed Afghan government emphasis on reintegration, COMISAF has issued initial guidance and established an ISAF Reintegration Cell to assist Afghan reintegration efforts.
- In close coordination with the Afghan authorities, ISAF is also developing specific programmes to help encourage people to stay away from violence and into gainful employment.
- There have been a number of spontaneous reintegration developments in the past months involving many insurgent fighters and commanders. ISAF is working with the Afghan authorities to help respond to such opportunities.