

Statement to the Heart of Asia Istanbul Process

Ministerial meeting – Amritsar, India

4 December 2016

Thank you, Excellencies, and thank you to the Government of India for their gracious hospitality in hosting us in the City of Amritsar.

NATO is pleased to be invited to speak at this auspicious occasion.

2016 has been an important year of achievements for Afghanistan and for NATO in terms of its continued support to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, including through the training, advice and assistance provided by its Resolute Support Mission, and the continued steadfast support of NATO allies and partners.

At Warsaw, NATO allies and partners demonstrated once again their commitment and enduring support for Afghanistan. At the Summit, held on 8 and 9 July 2016, allies and partners committed to continue financial sustainment of the ANDSF, including until the end of 2020, and to sustain the Resolute Support Mission beyond 2016. NATO's continuing commitment, alongside its partners, are of crucial importance to the progress and security of Afghanistan.

Progress is being made by the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces through a partnership with NATO that has lasted for more than a decade. We are confident that participants in this conference recognize the real benefits and value that NATO, working with and alongside other international partners, has brought to Afghanistan in its progress towards security and stability.

NATO allies and partners have stood beside their Afghan counterparts throughout the planning and execution of this fighting season, and will do so in the next. The significance of the support given by allies and partners should not be underestimated and go unrecognized.

The ANDSF are in better shape than they have ever been. There is a tangible strategy in place and these forces have held their own against insurgents for the past two years. The enemy is changing, with emerging threats from Daesh, and changing tactics – but the ANDSF are rising to these challenges. Openness has increased, women’s participation in the security sector is improving and coordination between different forces is better than it has ever been.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

Beyond the security sector, 2016 has been a successful year for Afghanistan in other areas as well. Electoral reform has moved forward. Progress is being made in tackling corruption. A peace agreement was signed between the Afghan Government and Hizb-I Islami – which may provide a template for future such agreements. These achievements belong to Afghanistan. While Afghanistan’s challenges must be met by Afghan-led and Afghan-owned solutions, NATO proudly stands shoulder-to-shoulder alongside Afghanistan as it rebuilds a peaceful and stable country at the heart of Asia.