

**International Conference on Afghanistan  
A Comprehensive Strategy in a Regional Context  
The Hague, 31 March 2009**

**Speech by Kai Eide  
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Ministers, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me thank the previous speakers for their words of support – which also reflect expectations!

I would like to add my thoughts to what has been said by others and reflect my hopes for what this conference can achieve.

First, this must be – and it is – a strong political manifestation of renewed support. Our efforts are and must continue to be a broad multinational effort, where we all share the burdens, but where the ownership belongs to the Afghan people and its Government in developing its country and consolidating democracy.

Second, it is a partnership where we all expect more of each other. The Afghan Government rightly expects greater impact from our efforts. The international community expects the Afghan Government to address more vigorously areas of great concern, such as corruption.

Third, we must push aside the atmosphere of doom and gloom, which sometimes overshadows the important progress we are now seeing in building the army – Minister Wardak is here, leading that effort – and now the police – Minister Atmar is here, leading that effort. A reform programme for the agriculture sector will soon be presented. There is important work going on in private sector development. The prognosis for poppy production this year is encouraging. If we do not see these positive developments and do not strengthen our support to them now, we may lose opportunities to see a turning point in addressing problems that have been of great concern to us all: crime, corruption, drug production, and food insecurity.

The promising developments we see are results of hard work of competent Afghan officials. But they would not have been possible without a strong international presence – civilian and military. Our common efforts are yielding results. This is not the time to hesitate but to stand firm in our commitments.

Fourth, we must set clear priorities. Yes, everything is required in Afghanistan, but only if we set clear priorities in our work, then we will be able to consolidate progress we have made in a number of other areas. If we don't, then much of what we have achieved will not be sustainable. These priorities are capacity- and institution-building, and generating

economic growth through agriculture, energy and infrastructure, in addition to strengthening the Afghan security sector. Building Afghan capacity must take centre stage in all our efforts. Ambitious investments in these sectors will be a decisive contribution to true Afghanisation.

Fifth, we must make use of the potential existing in the region to support the Afghan people and promote stability and growth. This spans from ambitious infrastructure and energy projects to education and capacity-building in agriculture, industry and administration. Often regional efforts may prove to be more effective and less costly than any similar assistance from countries further away.

Sixth, we must improve coordination. Our efforts are still too fragmented and do not provide the impact we seek. There have been so many calls for greater coordination. But fewer are ready to be coordinated. That must come to an end. The UN must do more, yes, and we are ready to do more to deepen our role and expand our presence around the country.

And finally, this conference must be the end of one phase and the beginning of a new phase. Strategic discussions can bring greater clarity and a clearer sense of direction. I welcome the US strategic review, its balanced emphasis on civilian and military efforts. But the time for strategic debates must now come to an end. We know what to do. Now comes the time for implementation based on Afghan ownership, clear priorities, and a better use of our resources. If we all concentrate on a coordinated and prioritized approach then we will be able to inject new energy into our efforts and give the Afghan people greater confidence in their future.

I hope that this meeting can mark the start of this new phase. That we will all concentrate not on what we have done but on what we can and must do.