

Stockholm, 4 December 2015

Joint communique from the visit of H.E President Ashraf Ghani to Stockholm on 4 December 2015

This year Sweden and Afghanistan celebrate 75 years of diplomatic relations. The excellent relations were reaffirmed during the visit of H.E President Ashraf Ghani to Stockholm on 4 December 2015.

The Swedish efforts in Afghanistan are long-term and have over the years encompassed political, military and development cooperation efforts. In particular, the efforts of the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan have been greatly appreciated. The Afghan people's quest for peace and democracy is one that has broad political support in Sweden. Sweden supports the Afghan Government's reform agenda and its efforts to initiate a peace process.

A bilateral agreement on development cooperation was signed between Sweden and Afghanistan to manifest the importance of the relationship. It confirms Sweden's continued support to Afghanistan. The agreement establishes a platform for consultations which will provide opportunities to discuss, on a regular basis, what we consider to be core issues in our development cooperation – democracy, human rights particularly the rights of women, jobs creation and inclusive and sustainable growth and development.

The heads of Government exchanged views on the current situation with regard to asylum seekers arriving in large numbers in Europe and in Sweden, including from Afghanistan, many of them unaccompanied minors. It was agreed that this is of mutual concern. Both governments are determined to do their utmost to address and improve this situation.

It was agreed to improve cooperation and to enter into negotiations on an agreement on readmission in accordance with Swedish and international law, including the right of asylum within the established due processes.

The international community, including Sweden, has over the years played a significant role in Afghanistan. Together with some 40 other countries, Sweden participated in one of the largest international operations in modern times, aimed at promoting peace, security and reconstruction in Afghanistan. Throughout the years 2002-2014, around 10 000 Swedish men and women have contributed to this effort. The Swedish contribution continues in the form of participation in the NATO-led train, advise, and assist mission "Resolute Support".

Afghanistan is the largest recipient of Swedish development cooperation. At the international conference in Tokyo 2012, Sweden pledged SEK 8,5 billion to Afghanistan for the period 2015-2024. The first half of that ambition is currently being realised through a development strategy encompassing an indicative volume of SEK 4,8 billion during the timeframe 2014-2019.