Statement on behalf of the European Union
by H.E. Mr. Franz-Michael Mellbin, EU Special Representative in Afghanistan
at the
Special Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB)
to review progress on the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF)

Kabul, 29 January 2014

Excellences, dear candidates, dear colleagues,

1. 2014 is a critical year for Afghanistan in which all Afghan citizens should have the opportunity to participate in making the fundamental decisions that will determine the future of this country. On behalf of the European Union and its Member States and the Kingdom of Norway and the Swiss Confederation, I have the honour to convey that the European Union remains firmly committed to a long-term partnership with Afghanistan with a view to supporting the country’s stability and sustainable development for and with the Afghan people.

2. The TMAF remains the central political agreement and the enduring framework for our engagement from transition to transformation based on the principle of mutual accountability. It outlines the required steps the current - as well as the future - Government of Afghanistan needs to take to improve the country’s economic and political governance, to put in place the fundamental measures for continued progress in Afghanistan. For Afghanistan to benefit from the full extent of the international aid pledges made in Tokyo, exceptional levels of aid need to be matched with a clear commitment and Governmental action leading to concrete progress and visible results. This is also important for maintaining the support from our national constituencies. We remain committed to increasing the effectiveness of our aid. It remains important to ensure access so our aid can reach its ultimate beneficiaries, the Afghan people. The Government of Afghanistan has shown the leadership and the capacity to generate reforms. The Government and its development partners need to maintain momentum on their commitments.

3. We appreciate the progress made in preparing for the presidential and provincial council elections, including the important roles played by the Independent Election Commission and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission. It is of vital importance that the Afghan-led and owned electoral process is timely, inclusive, transparent and credible leading to a legitimate outcome. All Afghan men and women need to have the opportunity to exercise their democratic right.
4. The EU remains concerned about human rights in Afghanistan, in particular the situation of women and girls. Urgent action is required to improve the full implementation of the statutory measures relating to women's rights. The publication of the report on the implementation of the Law on the Elimination of Violence Against Women is an important benchmark in assessing progress. The EU emphasizes the importance of ensuring the full independence of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. Sustained improvement of human rights will require systemic judicial reform, including by addressing the position of the Chief Justice, and a legal and judicial system that fully complies with international human rights norms.

5. Maintaining a stable macro-economic environment through transition is crucial. We are concerned that the decline in economic confidence and the projected slowdown in economic growth will impact on employment opportunities, especially for young Afghan men and women. Combating corruption, improving the investment climate and increasing revenue generation are major challenges the Government of Afghanistan will have to address given its fragile situation. Passing the Anti-Money Laundering Law, Counter-Terrorist Financing Law, Tax Administration Law, the Law introducing Value Added Tax and the Mining Law will send an important message of commitment to tackle these issues.

6. The EU's overarching strategic goal in Afghanistan in the coming years will be to support Afghanistan in its efforts to ensure resilience to safeguard progress and continue to work towards poverty alleviation and an ultimately sustainable Afghan state. The EU will continue to support the Government and ultimately the people of Afghanistan to promote peace, stability and security in Afghanistan and the region; support democracy; support the development of Afghanistan's institutions, including tackling corruption and impunity; encourage economic and human development, including further improving access to health and education; and foster rule of law and respect for human rights, in particular the rights of women and girls.

7. EU Member States are directly engaged in the TMAF dialogue through the 5+3 group on behalf of other development partners. We acknowledge the determination with which the Government, and especially the Minister of Finance has moved the TMAF agenda forward. Today, we also invite presidential candidates to engage in the TMAF discussions on Afghanistan's path towards self-reliance and to explain how they see Afghanistan's future relationship with the international community. It will be important to remain engaged in a credible and focused dialogue honouring our mutual TMAF commitments. We remain determined to support the people of Afghanistan both during transition and beyond to achieve their aspirations of security, democracy, justice and respect for human rights.