



Afghanistan. Over the last nine years Italian Development Assistance (IDA) has amounted to 473 million Euros. More than 400 million Euros have already been spent. In the Afghan Government Donors Report Italy is ranked first in matching the amounts committed with those actually disbursed.

All our projects are consistent with the overall objective of promoting local economic and social development while enhancing security and strengthening political institutions. We want our initiatives to be 'visible' and to deliver concrete and 'confidence building' results. This is why Italian programs focus mainly on development of rural areas. A total of 28 million Euros have already been spent and 17 million Euros are planned for initiatives on agriculture, irrigation, food security, health, schools, electricity, as well as microcredit to small businesses. In infrastructure, a contribution of 104 million Euros has been targeted for the Kabul-Bamyan road, a fundamental connector between Kabul and Herat.

Confidence building initiatives also include projects aimed at fighting corruption and establishing the rule of law; 82 million Euros have already been spent in our assistance programs designed to rebuild the Afghan judicial system.

My Government is convinced that regional cooperation is also essential for a stable, secure and democratic Afghanistan. A country which, in the words of the London Conference communiqué, should be a "land-bridge between South Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East and the Far East." In 2009, when Italy chaired the G8 meetings, we strongly supported the trade and economic integration process and the agreements to enhance a free trade area in the whole region.

London has made clear that the international community must remain committed, both in military operations and in civilian assistance. Much more needs to be done in terms of concrete achievements and visible progress in the eyes of the population. At the same time a legitimate and effective government in Kabul is fundamental in the overall goal of a stable Afghanistan. As Foreign Minister Frattini put it at the London Conference: "Training and advising our Afghan counterparts, expanding capacity building in various areas, as well as fostering strengthened economic and administrative sectors, should all grow in parallel under direct Afghan leadership. These are the current priorities and they need to be sustained so that Afghan institutions can take full responsibility for their country." [DC]

*Ambassador Terzi is a career diplomat. Prior to Washington, he was Ambassador to Israel (2002-2004) and Permanent Representative to the United Nations (2008-2009), heading the Italian Delegation to the Security Council.*