

Taliban and the Haqqani network as entities, under their counter-terrorism sanctions, which include secondary sanctions and may in turn impact the work of, among others, European operators. All interventions will therefore be conducted under the strict implementation of the UN sanctions regime, which allows contacts with the Taliban but prohibits any funds to be passed to those on the sanctions list or operating under their command, i.e. main part of the government.

- The international community has therefore to move away from a state-building approach; the Afghanistan Partnership Framework agreed in Geneva in November 2020 is in practice not relevant anymore as a framework for engagement, although its principles, also enshrined in the Key elements for sustained international support to Peace and Development in Afghanistan, remain valid.
- The large aid community present in Afghanistan for the last 20 years has shrunk.

In the new aid architecture in the making, the United Nations is expected to take the lead.

While the humanitarian track is in many ways separate, including WFP, WHO, UNICEF and UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), under humanitarian principles, the main challenge is to design a workable funding structure for the direct basic needs and livelihoods assistance part where political sensitivities and monitoring are more challenging in the current context and ensure coordination among humanitarian and direct basic needs and livelihoods assistance actions in order to achieve maximum synergy. A certain degree of variety of the instruments in the name of efficiency and effectiveness in the different tracks is deemed advisable by the UN while fostering a “One UN” approach. Intense work is underway to simplify the UN offer as much as possible under the authority of the Resident Coordinator. While different options to channel funds are being considered, the recommendation at UN level is for setting-up a new multidonor, multi-partner UN Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan under the authority of the Deputy Secretary General, with a board that would decide on priorities. The UN has in-depth experience of such mechanisms, in Yemen for example, including accountability mechanisms.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has proposed an ‘Area-Based Programme for Early Recovery and Stabilisation’ that would constitute its Afghanistan country programme in the coming years, pivoting its engagement towards a decentralised and area-based portfolio of projects allowing direct work with beneficiary communities through civil society and micro and small enterprises. The Area-based Programme would be centred around cash-based interventions and focus on sustaining essential services, protection of livelihoods, investment in climate-resilient, local community infrastructure and – to ensure full ownership and conflict-sensitive interventions – community planning and social cohesion; it would be centred around cash-based interventions, employment generation (Cash for Work), and support to women-led businesses in the informal sector, social enterprises and enterprises expanding to new areas (Cash for Markets). UN agencies will contribute to the activities of the programme on the basis of their respective mandates.

In parallel, the resumption of activities under the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) still needs to be fully clarified.. The ARTF was originally conceived in 2002 as a multi-donor trust fund to support immediate stabilisation and reconstruction needs in Afghanistan through a coordinated financing mechanism. It has since then evolved to become the main vehicle for multi-donor, on-budget support for the Government’s national programmes reform agenda, fiscal sustainability and the prioritisation and delivery of the national development strategy. The ARTF was supported by 34 donors (of which 18 are currently active) and