France provides $20 million of its development funding through the European Union, with another $20 million spent outside of the European Union system. The European Union has a lot of autonomy in the way that it spends the money contributed by member states. The European Union engages and informs its member states and develops common positions through a Working Group in Brussels, where the development program is identified. This allows for an efficient and consistent approach to development.

In the lead-up to the London Conference France participated in the Heads of Agencies meetings and engaged with the 5+3 group (US, UK, Germany, European Union, Japan, Nordic, Canada, Australia). The 5+3 group of donors has seen an improvement in its functioning over the past year and a half. The content used to be light, without a lot of broader coordination outside of 5+3 meetings. This improved functioning is attributed to people working within UNAMA who were really efficient. The group now conducts more coordination prior to meetings, now consulting with other donors before they discuss and take decisions. Consultation is also performed at the Working Group level.

Heads of Agencies is the broader donor forum and some donors participate in the process more, and others participate less. Meetings generally take place every two-weeks, with the Afghan government participating every second week through the Ministry of Finance. The 5+3 group also holds meetings with the Ministry of Finance at times.

The 61 points from realizing self-reliance could replace NPPs. The government wants to rationalize and prioritize NPPs. These are the necessary first steps for determining and moving forward with the development agenda. We need to determine how to use the NPPs and what is possible with them. It can provide a theoretical framework. NPPs took a long time to develop and it would take too long to produce a new strategy. However, 61 government priorities equals none. It is too many. Donors and Afghans want broader priorities, with incentive to focus.

The Afghan government has to do policy, but does not have the capacity to prioritize. There has been a centralization of policy in the President’s Office with Ministries implementing, which could be a good thing or could be a bad thing.

There has been an evolution in donor coordination and there have been many attempts to do so. USAID was alone for a long time, but there has been more will over the past two and a half years to discuss with small donors. USAID has changed its approach realizing the limits of their past efforts. They now have a more global picture. USAID engages in most sectors and has joined most meetings. There has been coordination from USAID on water; and a good effort amongst USAID, UN, Canada, and the European Union to coordinate health, but this is still not enough.
Donors are found with no priorities. What are the priorities of the donors? Very broad. Stabilization, development, different purposes, some are long term, some short, objectives change; Work has been done to identify other donor priorities;

There is Afghan fatigue and bigger donors want all donors to do more to share the burden and to divide tasks. Smaller donors have different interests. They are happy to be consulted and get different information, but do not need all the details; large donors occupy field and small donors fit around them;

Areas that should be improved include: work on priorities from Afghan government with donor agreement; work on financial framework, link to priorities; investment and operations; selective to make it work; reinforce capacity of ministry partners, not just the Ministry of Finance; trust funds are the best coordination mechanisms as it allows donors – especially small ones - to work together; there is less money so we need to be more efficient; Less money is easier to with, but it requires coordination, whereas more money allows donors to act unilaterally.

Follow-up:

- evaluated