

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR MANJEEV SINGH PURI, DEPUTY PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF INDIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS AT THE UNGA DEBATE ON
‘SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN’ ON NOVEMBER 27, 2012

Mr. President,

At the outset, I would like to express India's appreciation for scheduling this discussion. I also avail this opportunity to commend the German delegation for coordinating inter-governmental negotiations in an excellent manner that has led us to this annual General Assembly resolution on the "Situation in Afghanistan".

As we have been doing for the last several years, we are happy to co-sponsor this resolution, which is traditionally adopted by consensus.

Mr. President,

Major international and regional conferences on Afghanistan have been held during the last one year against the backdrop of ongoing security transition. The international community's has renewed its commitment for peace, security and development in Afghanistan at conferences in Bonn, Chicago and Tokyo and at the regional level in Istanbul and Kabul.

As the Afghan government assumes responsibility for security and governance with the drawdown of the ISAF by end 2014, we welcome the pledges of \$16 billion of financial aid through 2015 and to sustain support through 2017 at, or near, levels of the past decade at the Tokyo Conference. At the same time, we are conscious that these figures represent a base-line or minimum requirement for Afghanistan to sustain itself.

The Delhi Investment Summit of June 28 hosted by India was an important endeavour in focussing regional and international attention towards investments in Afghanistan and their potential in providing economic development and stability to Afghanistan during the transition period.

Mr. President,

Amidst the ISAF drawdown and accompanying economic downturn, it is indeed worrisome that the infrastructure of terror is still intact in the region. The Secretary General's latest report notes that 'little has changed in the underlying dynamics to mitigate a deep-seated cycle of conflict'. Further, a 'diminished international presence will have a large financial impact in many areas which, at least in the short term, may even exacerbate predatory behaviour'.

Afghanistan continues to face an existential threat from terrorism, drawing upon ideological, financial and logistical support from beyond its borders. The security situation remains fragile and there has been a sharp increase in the variety, spread and intensity of attacks by the Taliban and their backers. Moreover, cross-border shellings of

last few months have caused large-scale disruptions to normal life and have sparked public outrage. The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) are ill-equipped to repel this challenge without substantial assistance from the international community. We need concerted action to isolate and root out the syndicate of terrorism which includes elements of the Al-Qaida, Taliban, Lashkar-e-Taiba and other terrorist and extremist groups.

As Afghanistan takes forward the task of national reconciliation in accordance with the criteria as laid forth in the Kabul communiqué, we fully support the efforts for regional confidence-building as a critical component of international efforts to support the country.

Regional cooperation and connectivity are critical for Afghanistan's political and economic progress. The Istanbul 'Heart of Asia' process is an important step in this direction. Towards strengthening this cooperation, India has taken the lead in two commercial Confidence Building Measures under the Istanbul process.

We are fully cognizant that the economic viability of Afghanistan depends on its fuller integration into its neighbourhood, so that it can regain its historical role of a land-bridge between South Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East and Eurasia. The development of transport infrastructure and transit arrangements linking Afghanistan to the North, South, East and West, including, through the Chabahar port, would benefit not only Afghanistan but the entire Central Asian region by creating trade, transit and investment linkages.

Mr. President,

Afghanistan and India have had a long shared history going back over millennia. The two countries are natural strategic partners by virtue of geography and a common vision of peace and cooperation in the region.

Our bilateral relationship is extensive, multi-faceted and characterized by high level interaction. President Karzai visited India earlier this month. This visit offered an opportunity to review the entire gamut of bilateral relationship and discuss regional and international issues of mutual interest. During the visit, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh reiterated India's support to Afghanistan during the crucial period of transition till end 2014 and thereafter.

The implementation of the Strategic Partnership Agreement of October, 2011 between the two countries has already been set in motion with the convening of the first meeting of the Partnership Council on May 1, 2012.

During the last decade, India has pledged up to \$ 2 billion in development and humanitarian assistance. We have managed to carry out some of the most economical and cost-effective projects in Afghanistan. The \$ 500 million assistance announced by Prime Minister of India in May 2011 is being spent from 2012-2015. The projects under

consideration will be in line with the projects suggested under the National Priority Programmes of the Government of Afghanistan. The pace and nature of the utilization of the present and future Indian assistance will be determined by the preference, comfort level and absorptive capacity of the Afghan government.

Mr. President,

India remains unwavering in its commitment to assisting the people of Afghanistan in their endeavour to build a peaceful, stable, democratic and prosperous nation.

We support the good work done by UNAMA. It is important that amidst the cutback in UN foot-print in Afghanistan and reconfiguration of UNAMA due to budgetary constraints, all efforts should be made to avoid adverse impact on its operational effectiveness.

Moving forward, we need to create an enabling environment where the Afghan people could live in peace and security and decide their future themselves, without outside interference, coercion and intimidation. The international community must continue to work with renewed vigour and unity of purpose towards strengthening efforts of the Afghan government in seeking solutions that are inclusive and led by the Afghan people themselves.

Thank you.

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