

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR H.S. PURI, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE ON THE
SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN
AT THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON SEPTEMBER 29, 2011

At the outset, Mr. President, I would like to thank you for scheduling today's debate on the situation in Afghanistan. I welcome H.E. Mr. Zalmay Rassoul, Foreign Minister of Afghanistan for his presence in the Council and thank him for his statement. We are grateful for the latest report of the Secretary General and are appreciative of the briefing by SRSG Staffan de Mistura.

Mr. President,

We are deeply concerned that the overall security environment in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate. The latest Secretary General's report notes that the average monthly number of security incidents is up 39% as compared to the same period in 2010. While the process of transition of security responsibilities to Afghan National Security Forces has commenced since July, 2011, it is indeed worrisome that there has been no let up in terrorist violence.

The Taliban has opted for attacking high-security targets, assassinations and launching complex suicide attacks in urban centres including Kabul. Important political figures and government officials had been killed in recent past including Ahmad Wali Karzai, the Chairman of the Kandahar Provincial Council and Ghulam Haidar Hameedi, Mayor of the Kandahar. The Intercontinental Hotel, the British Council and the US Embassy in Kabul have also been targeted.

We unreservedly condemn the assassination of Chairman of the High Peace Council and former President of Afghanistan Professor Burhanudin Rabbani last week. Tragically, the forces of terror and hatred have silenced yet another powerful voice of reason and peace in Afghanistan.

As we have repeatedly stressed in this Council, these attacks point to a dangerous osmosis of ideologies, ambitions, training and operations among the syndicate of terrorism in the region with suicide terrorism as its main technique, and targets not limited to Afghanistan.

The resilience of insurgents and their ability to target areas otherwise considered safe and secure, is a grim reminder that the security gains are still tenuous.

Mr. President,

For peace, stability and security in Afghanistan, it is imperative that the ongoing transition must be linked to the ground realities rather than rigid timetables. This, the international community in its hurry to withdraw from a combat role in Afghanistan, will ignore at its own peril.

The Secretary General's latest report underscores that for success of transition, it is important that the Afghan National Security Forces continue to demonstrate enhanced independent capability and professionalism to assume an increasing level of responsibility and accountability.

We support further strengthening of the Afghan National Security Forces. This must go hand-in-hand with enhancement of their capabilities along with adequate enablers. It is important that the transition must be Afghan owned, the transition must be planned and implemented in a systematic manner, and the transition must ensure the protection and promotion of the human rights of all Afghans.

For security and stabilization of Afghanistan, it is important to isolate and root out the syndicate of terrorism which includes elements of the Al Qaida, Taliban, Laskar-e-Taiba and other terrorist and extremist groups operating from within and outside Afghanistan's borders. These groups are ideologically and operationally fused and their bonds have strengthened over the years. It would not be possible to consolidate the gains on the security front unless the international community is able to firmly deal with safe havens for terrorist groups outside Afghanistan's borders.

We fully support an Afghan-led inclusive and transparent process of reconciliation, adhering to the redlines as enunciated by the Afghan Government in the London and Kabul communiqués. As we have earlier stressed, it must be accompanied by an inclusive political process and intra-Afghan dialogue and include renunciation of violence, cutting of ties to terrorist groups, and respect for the Afghan constitution with its protections for human rights, including the rights of women.

Mr. President,

Afghan ownership and leadership is also vital for development and reconstruction in Afghanistan. This also implies greater coherence, coordination and further streamlining of international community's development-related efforts including aligning of

assistance with Afghan national priorities and increasingly working through Afghan institutions. We are happy to note UNAMA's efforts in this regard.

With the onset of the drawdown of foreign security forces and the transition process, it is all the more important for the international community, especially the regional countries, to remain committed in this crucial phase, when Afghan national institutions are still being developed and consolidated.

It is also important that Afghanistan's growth strategy is built upon the country's comparative advantage of abundant natural resources and its strategic geographical location. These would have to be the building blocks of our vision for Afghanistan as a hub linking Central and South Asia through pipelines, trade and transit routes for the common good of the people of our region and the world. We support the New Silk Road initiative as this would be an important step in that direction.

India remains committed to partnering the Government and people of Afghanistan in the building of a peaceful, stable, democratic and pluralistic nation. India's assistance programme is spread across Afghanistan and spans almost the entire gamut of economic and social development activities. We are undertaking reconstruction and development activities in Afghanistan, with our total bilateral assistance commitment reaching US \$ 2 billion approximately. We have laid special emphasis on capacity building and human resource development, which in our opinion are the building blocks for a robust and self reliant economy.

Indian companies have evinced interest in exploitation of Afghanistan's iron ore reserves and India is also participating in the TAPI (Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India) gas pipeline project. These are projects which would call for large investments and express our resolve to cooperate with Afghanistan on plans involving regional integration for the mutual benefit of all stakeholders.

SAARC, of which Afghanistan is a full member, is an important vehicle for regional economic cooperation within the South Asian region. We have always considered Afghanistan as a South Asian country with natural complementarities and synergies with other countries of South Asia and one which is uniquely placed to build bridges even beyond it. India's rapidly growing economy and its large market make it a natural destination for Afghan exports. Similarly, India can be a cost effective and efficient source of Afghan imports.

Mr. President,

As the security transition moves forward, Afghanistan needs long-term commitment and support of the international community. We look forward to the forthcoming Istanbul and Bonn Conferences and the comprehensive review of UNAMA's mandated activities

and UN support in Afghanistan by the end of this year. We hope that these would contribute to efforts towards lasting peace, stability, economic sustainability and regional integration of Afghanistan in the years ahead.

Thank you.

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