

**STATEMENT BY MR. V.K. NAMBIAR, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE ON
AGENDA ITEM 28: THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN AND ITS
IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL PECE AND SECUIRTY; AND
AGENDA ITEM 40(F): EMERGENCY INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR
PEACE, NORMALCY AND RECONSRUCTION OF WAR-STRICKEN
AFGHANISTAN AT THE 58TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ON DECEMBER 5, 2003**

Mr. President,

A review of the political situation and progress in the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan assumes utmost importance in the light of the efforts underway to construct a vibrant, stable and economically self-sufficient democracy in the country after decades of instability and misrule. We therefore welcome this opportunity to participate in the discussion on these items on the agenda of the General Assembly.

Mr. President,

Today marks the second anniversary of the Bonn Agreement on Afghanistan. Few would contest the scope and depth of the changes that have taken place in Afghanistan since then. Foremost among them has been the implantation of the seeds of democratic values in Afghanistan. The enunciation of these values began with the convening of the *Loya Jirga*. They were reinforced by the recent release of the draft constitution ahead of the Constitutional Loya Jirga, and, we all hope, this process will culminate in the holding of presidential and general elections.

India has supported the political process in Afghanistan as the best means of ensuring the stability of Afghanistan and the economic and social development of its people. Adherence to the schedule laid down under the Bonn Agreement in its implementation has been a strong indicator of the success of the political process so far. It is important that the timelines relating to implementation of the remaining milestones in the political process be maintained. This will demonstrate the resolve of the international community to remain steadfast against the attempts of Taliban remnants and other interests to derail the process.

The development of national institutions, introduction of economic and fiscal systems, commencement of economic programmes and reconstruction activities are all

indicators of the rapid progress that has been achieved in Afghanistan over the past two years. The credit for these achievements must go necessarily to the people of Afghanistan led by President Hamid Karzai and his Government. In their efforts, they have received the steadfast support of the international community.

Unfortunately, the strong desire and will of the Afghan people to propel themselves and their country out of the dark ages of Taliban rule into the 21st century by adopting the political, economic and social systems of the current age, have been obstructed by the same regressive forces that have held back the country these last decades. The threats posed by the regrouping of Taliban cadres and their sympathisers, particularly in the south and south-eastern parts of the country have been highlighted in all of the Secretary General's recent reports on Afghanistan and in debates held within the Security Council.

The Security Council mission which returned from Afghanistan last month concluded that "insecurity caused by terrorist activities, factional fights and drug-related crime" remained the major concern of the Afghans. One of the main recommendations of the Mission was that all neighbours of Afghanistan should fully implement the Kabul Declaration on Good Neighbourly Relations of 22 December 2002 and redouble their efforts, in particular within the framework of the tripartite commission, to preserve peace and security, especially in the southern and south-eastern areas.

Terrorism and the systematic campaign to target international organisations, aid agencies and NGOs represent a direct challenge to the efforts of the Afghan Government to assert its control over the length and breadth of the country. They also undermine efforts to rehabilitate sections of the Afghan population that have been particularly vulnerable to the instability that have plagued the country in the past. The Security Council Mission report notes that these threats have "significantly slowed reconstruction by limiting the access of government, international humanitarian and development agencies." It concludes that long-term stability for Afghanistan cannot "be achieved without the cooperation of the neighbouring States".

Another area of particular concern is the issue of drugs in Afghanistan. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has drawn attention to the spurt in drug cultivation and trafficking in Afghanistan. What is particularly alarming is the fact that a small area of Afghanistan, mainly concentrated on its southern and south-eastern borders, has the capacity to supply almost three-quarters of the heroin sold in Europe and virtually all the heroin sold in Russia. Also disconcerting are the linkages between drug trafficking and terrorism. A conference on drugs held in Paris in May, 2003 highlighted the nexus between drug trafficking and the financing of terrorism, and recommended urgent, swift and coordinated action to address the problem.

Mr. President,

At this critical stage in Afghanistan's development, the continued support and assistance of the international community is vital. Economic development and reconstruction activities must go hand-in-hand with efforts to check attempts by the Taliban and other negative forces to regroup within the country.

India has continued to contribute to the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan. Despite other calls on our resources, we have committed up to \$ 270 million for Afghanistan's reconstruction. We have undertaken, in partnership with the Government of Afghanistan, projects in a number of sectors ranging from transportation, airlines and telecommunications to health, education and agriculture. India has also offered expertise in areas such as information technology, judiciary and police training to the Afghan Government and people. As part of its assistance activities, India has initiated work on some major infrastructural projects in power transmission, hydro-electricity, irrigation and road-construction.

India has undertaken its programme of economic assistance in Afghanistan with a firm belief in Afghan ownership. In our view, external efforts should reinforce and support Afghan aspirations and decisions. The edifice of an independent and stable Afghanistan can only be established if Afghanistan can maintain normal and friendly relations with all States, particularly its neighbours, but without any country claiming special rights over the people or territory of Afghanistan. India's relations with Afghanistan are based on mutually supportive bilateral relations. It is our aim and endeavour to strengthen the natural and historical process in the region as a means of contributing to its stability and development.

Mr. President,

Afghanistan is at a delicate crossroads between regression and modernity, anarchy and stability, darkness and light. The fate of the Afghan people is inextricably linked to the security and stability of the international community as evident in the aftermath of September 11. There is no choice before the international community other than to support the Afghan Government and people in their endeavour to place their country irretrievably beyond the shadows of its recent past.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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