

**STATEMENT BY MR. KAMALESH SHARMA, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE ON  
SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON NOVEMBER 13, 2001**

**Mr. President,**

**We commend your taking the time out during the period of General Debate to chair this important meeting, which has not come a day too soon. We would also like to express our deep appreciation of your delegation's contribution to the Council's work during the last two years.**

**Since its birth, the Taliban has tortured and tormented Afghanistan. This obscurantist, bigoted, blinkered and sadistic regime, foisted by its foreign sponsor on the Afghan people to subserve its self-serving agenda, has taken Afghanistan to a dark age scarcely to be credited in the world today. The Taliban, shunned by the international community, has destroyed Afghanistan's multi-ethnic culture, tradition of tolerance and historic legacy, uprooting millions of Afghans and driving them from their homes. It spared neither its people nor its priceless cultural heritage. On our collective memory will remain etched forever the picture of a woman being shot dead in a stadium and the blasting of the incomparable Bamiyan Buddhas.**

**The sinister nature of the Taliban was not unknown to the world and certainly not to this Council. By its resolution 1267 of October 1999, it recognized that Taliban-held Afghanistan was an incubator and haven of international terrorism. By resolution 1333 of December 2000, it recognized the inadequacy of its efforts to reign in this regime's unremitting export of terrorism, imposed some additional sanctions and decided to set up a monitoring mechanism to ensure compliance, a clear recognition that the sanctions were being undermined and violated. But, until 11<sup>th</sup> September, there was no mechanism in place. I leave it to this Council's collective conscience to consider whether it responded adequately to the challenge posed to international peace and security by the international terrorism emanating from Taliban-held Afghanistan and those who supported it. The world has paid a heavy price for its failures in Afghanistan, in installments big and small. This has to come to an end. And for this, as a first step, the Taliban should go, lock, stock and barrel. We should not delude ourselves into believing that there is something as "moderate Taliban": there is not, just as there is no good terrorist. The phrase itself is an oxymoron. The phenomenon of the Taliban is like cancer. Any good doctor would attest that if you do not extirpate it fully and to the last cell, it comes back, working its malign influence. The unequivocal and clear message that should come from this Council should be that the Taliban has to go, quickly and forever. It has no place in any future dispensation in Afghanistan, in any guise whatsoever. India supports the current campaign to eradicate the terrorist networks in Afghanistan. We**

hope that it reaches an early and successful conclusion.

After years, there is a window of opportunity to bring peace back to Afghanistan. We should not let this slip out of our hands. The international community should work towards this even while the military campaign continues, so that we avoid a political vacuum at the end of the campaign. In restoring Afghanistan to political health, a new paradigm and idiom is required. No more Great Games, or any games. An Afghanistan at peace with itself is in the best interests of all.

The new government in Afghanistan should be broad-based and multi-ethnic - with equitable representation of all ethnicities and religious groups, which would reflect the composite mosaic that Afghanistan has historically been. It should reflect the will of the Afghan people and should be the outcome of an intra-Afghan process. If not, it is unlikely to prove acceptable, stable, secure or enduring. It should restore internal peace and harmony and set the stage for economic and social development, so desperately required in Afghanistan after years of untold devastation.

The constitutional and legal structure that emerges, expressing a balance between the centre and regions, should fully protect human rights, including the rights of women, children and minorities, reversing the treatment and discrimination faced by them under the Taliban, healing the grave injustices and wounds inflicted on them and restituting their rightful place in society. Afghanistan's troubled history of internal frictions and struggles of the last few decades, exacerbated by destructive external interference, argues that there may be advantages in establishing a neutral political structure, with guarantees and protection from outside for its neutrality.

Mr. President,

A secure government capable of protecting its people will require a credible and effective security force. In creating this force, it would be useful to integrate different non-Taliban armed groups into an effective national military and police force. However, neither the new Afghanistan government nor its nascent security force would be in a position to deal effectively with the thousands of 'Arab-Afghans' or other foreign nationals fighting on the side of the Taliban. These rogue elements, fully capable of destabilising any new government, cannot be wished away. Many of these are unwanted in their own countries and have no place to go. Many others are in Afghanistan on the encouragement of their authorities who should be obliged to ask them to return. These armed elements and mercenaries would threaten to unravel any new dispensation, a risk which neither the people of Afghanistan nor the international

community can afford to run. These elements, therefore, would have to be conclusively and effectively neutralised to enable the intra-Afghan force to discharge its functions of assuring peace and security within the new framework.

In the name of protecting national interests, never spelt out, attempts are being made from some quarters to retain a veto over the architecture of the future Afghan polity. To accept this would be wrong in principle as well as in practice. In principle because it is for a country and its people to determine its own government, and not outsiders. Would those who would claim a veto over the new government in Afghanistan give the same right over their own government to the Afghan people or its government, if they were to claim this right? In practice, what if there is no agreement on the composition of the new Afghan government, because of this claimed right of interference. Should there be no government in Afghanistan? The absurdity of this right to veto is patent. The new Afghan government should be a government of the Afghans, by the Afghans and for the Afghans, and should be seen by the Afghans as such. Anything short of this would make it suspect and contrived in the eyes of its own people, undermining its credibility and acceptance.

But countries in the neighbourhood of Afghanistan as well as the international community have legitimate concerns to which the new Afghanistan government would need to be responsive. Afghanistan can no longer be a nursery and epicentre of international terrorism fueled by religious extremism. It should purge itself of this menace. It should show resolve to defeat the problem of drug-trafficking. It should not be a centre for destabilising other governments. On its part, the new Afghanistan government should have the assurances that there would be no interference in its own internal affairs. And this is the key to the future of Afghanistan. Those who harbour the desire to control or dominate Afghanistan should shed it, for now and forever, for their own good, for the good of Afghanistan and for the good of the international community.

At this critical juncture, the international community has a crucial role to play in encouraging, supporting and assisting the intra-Afghan process to replace the Taliban with a broad-based government. We believe that the United Nations should be at the centre of international efforts and, therefore, support the role of Secretary General's Special Representative Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi. We have heard with very great interest the proposals he has made as to the way forward and thank him for his untiring engagement and thoughts. In his difficult and challenging assignment, Ambassador Brahimi would require, and should receive, all assistance from the international community. To facilitate and channelise this, clearly, the Six plus Two Group, which has not been effective in the past, cannot be relied upon. This would be a triumph of hope over experience. India would like to add its voice to others from the international community emphasising the urgency for establishing a new international framework which would include countries that have a legitimate and benign interest in, and influence on, developments in Afghanistan and a willingness to engage constructively

and with goodwill in its recovery and rehabilitation. We see no reason why this new framework should not be supported as those who backed and sustained the Taliban until recently, but now find it expedient to disown it, also affirm that they have changed their spots and subscribe to the need for a broad-based, multi-ethnic and representative government in Afghanistan. This would be a litmus test of their sincerity.

Mr. President,

As a country in Afghanistan's immediate neighbourhood and with an intimate association with that country which reaches back into dim history, India has a deep interest in the political, economic and socio-cultural welfare and development of Afghanistan. It is willing, and ready, to contribute to the process of bringing lasting peace, stability and development to Afghanistan.

After ensuring peace and security, the first priority in post-conflict Afghanistan would be reconstruction and rehabilitation of the country with massive external assistance. The developmental needs of the Afghan people have to be adequately addressed, and a conducive climate created for the return of the millions of refugees who have recently left the country. India has already announced economic assistance of medicine, medical services and one million tonnes of wheat for the needy in Afghanistan and those displaced from that country. We have also declared our intention of extending a line of credit of US\$ 100 million for post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation work. We are prepared to do more.

Mr. President,

We do not have the luxury of time. The Council must act with despatch and purpose, in a transparent manner, to bring peace, political stability and health, truly participative governance and economic well-being back to Afghanistan. In its endeavours, it can count on our full support and cooperation.

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