

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR HARDEEP SINGH PURI, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE,
DEBATE ON 'THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN' AT THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY
COUNCIL, ON SEPTEMBER 20, 2012

Mr. President, I join others in thanking you for scheduling today's debate on the situation in Afghanistan. I would also like to extend a very warm welcome to Dr. Zalmay Rassoul, Foreign Minister of Afghanistan to the Security Council and thank him for his statement. We also thank the UN Secretary General for his latest report and are appreciative of the briefing by Mr. Ján Kubiš, UNSG's Special Representative for Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

2. Afghanistan is in midst of a critical phase of transition wherein it assumes responsibility for security and governance with the drawdown of the ISAF by end 2014. The sustained commitment of the international community to Afghanistan is essential if it is to stand on its own feet.

3. During the last one year, the international community's has renewed its commitment to Afghanistan at conferences at Bonn, Chicago and Tokyo and at the regional level in Istanbul and Kabul. The Delhi Investment Summit of June 28 hosted by India was also an endeavour to contribute to this effort by calling attention to the role and potential for foreign investment and domestic private sector development in providing a narrative of opportunity and employment to counter the anxiety of the ISAF drawdown.

4. As we assist Afghanistan in attaining its long-cherished goal of self-reliance, we also need to bear in mind that the infrastructure of terror is still intact in the region. The Secretary General's report rightly 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'.

5. 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 has been compounded over the last two months by a sharp increase in the variety, spread and intensity of attacks by the Taliban and their backers. Moreover, cross-border shellings have caused large-scale disruptions to normal life and have sparked public outrage. The ANSF is 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.

6. 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.

7. The Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework is a noble effort, which we fully support. However, we must not forget that true mutuality can only be achieved at equal levels of capacity. Good governance requires a strong state that has full control over its territory, which is not yet the case in Afghanistan. While good governance must be a necessary component of international assistance to Afghanistan, it is not enough. It must be complemented by strong leadership, the strengthening of the ANSF, and the development of an investment regime in Afghanistan that protects the national interest while promoting investment.

Mr. President,

8. India visualizes its partnership with Afghanistan as needs-based and long-term, not conditions based or transitory. We remain unwavering in our commitment to assisting the people of Afghanistan in their endeavour to build a peaceful, stable, democratic and prosperous nation.

9. 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.

10. As Afghanistan takes forward the task of national reconciliation even while it assumes full responsibility for security, we fully support the efforts for regional confidence-building as a critical component of international efforts to support the country. Enhanced developmental assistance and foreign investments in Afghanistan and building regional linkages are critical in ensuring an irreversible transition in the country. The Istanbul 'Heart of Asia' process was an important step in that direction. India has also partnered in this regional consensus towards the stability and prosperity of Afghanistan by leading the two Commercial Confidence Building Measures, i.e. the Chambers of Commerce and Commercial Opportunities CBMs, initially agreed upon for implementation in the Istanbul process.

11. In our view regional cooperation on projects of multilateral scope and benefit could give an impetus to this scenario. 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,

12. Moving forward, we need sustained international commitment to strengthen Afghanistan government's capacity for security, governance and economic development. 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.

13. 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 capacity and mandate implementation.

Thank you.

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