

STATEMENT BY MR. NIRUPAM SEN, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, ON
THE QUESTION IN AFGHANISTAN AT THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON
OCTOBER 15, 2007

Mr. President,

Let me begin by expressing my appreciation for your successful stewardship of the Security Council over the past fortnight. Let me also express my appreciation for the dedication shown by Special Representative Tom Koenigs, and wish him all the best in future.

Mr. President,

Today's debate on Afghanistan is most opportune, taking place a fortnight after the High-Level Meeting chaired by the UN Secretary-General and His Excellency, President Karzai. As on that occasion, today's meeting affords us an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to the stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan. As the Minister of External Affairs of India noted two weeks ago, India is fully committed to implementing the benchmarks of the Afghanistan Compact and to addressing the inter-related security, political and developmental challenges facing Afghanistan.

The central task in Afghanistan involves addressing, in the face of insecurity created by vicious terrorist violence, the socio-economic challenges that are the result of decades of strife, destruction and privation. The challenge before the international community is, on the one hand, to ensure security while helping resolve these problems, while on the other, to transform our respective high-level political commitments into operational strategies and concrete outcomes on the ground. Only if we succeed in all three tasks can we create the conditions that engender greater national ownership of security, reconstruction and developmental processes in the long-term. It is an unavoidable reality that it is only in the long-term that we can rebuild national institutions destroyed over the decades.

Therefore, our collective goal must be to build upon the significant successes recorded thus far, while recognizing the fact that the road ahead is long. We must redouble our political and economic commitment to help Afghanistan over the medium- to long-term, and ensure that our

determination is unshaken by short term developments. The resolve displayed by UNAMA in this context, in expanding its presence to 17 offices, is commendable. We look forward to further expansion as and when capacities are created.

In this context, no challenge is more of a test of our collective resolve than that posed by the security situation. It is also the threat that could most quickly undermine our collective efforts in Afghanistan. Therefore we cannot and must not underestimate the ferocity of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda resurgence. India fully appreciates the Government of Afghanistan's position that the challenge of terrorism, in particular the growing trend of suicide attacks, cross-border infiltration, and the nexus between terrorism and drug trafficking requires a robust international political solution and a stronger domestic military response. At the same time, as our Minister underscored, security challenges must be addressed realistically. That is to say, we in the international community must provide appropriate responses, including security enforcement and economic and developmental strategies that rapidly bring the benefits of governance and development to people in the worst-affected districts. We can ill-afford partial solutions that provide only temporary relief in limited areas: terrorism cannot be fought piecemeal.

With regard to the inter-related aspect of addressing the developmental challenge, India believes that the good work being undertaken by the international community in Afghanistan can only be sustained in the long-term if we invest in developing Afghan human resources. For this, a multi-pronged approach is required: on the one hand, we must invest in rebuilding infrastructure and generating employment, and on the other, we must progressively transfer the necessary skills and managerial authority to the Afghan people so that they can take on the ownership of these projects.

For our part, I must underline that India's commitment to the rebuilding and development of Afghanistan remains unflinching. Our assistance programme, which has been in place since the Berlin Conference, has now reached US\$ 750 million. Of this total pledge, India has already disbursed around US \$ 300 million in the implementation of various assistance projects since 2002. Our projects cover the gamut of activities, ranging from capacity building projects to infrastructure creation and reconstruction.

With regard to capacity-building, India has trained more than 2,700 Afghan citizens in India. Since 2006, we have annually trained 500 Afghan public officials in short-term courses and 500 Afghan students at University-level courses in India. India is also implementing a capacity-development programme in public administration, in partnership with the UNDP, to depute 30 Indian civil servants to assist in various Afghan Ministries. In addition, India is including a strong capacity-development component in all its infrastructure projects in Afghanistan. As regards projects, apart from completion of ongoing mega-infrastructure projects, India is now simultaneously focusing upon Small Development Projects. These include activities that require the participation of local communities. Such projects are aimed at providing the most direct "peace dividend" to communities that are yet to see the benefits of development. India has worked to align its

assistance programmes with Afghan priorities. Our projects are being implemented in close coordination with Afghan stake-holders, focusing particularly on local implementation, management and ownership of assets.

Mr President,

As a country with traditionally close historic, cultural and regional links with Afghanistan, it is natural for us to see regional cooperation as the third pillar for stabilizing Afghanistan. Regional economic cooperation is an important benchmark of the Compact, and is a strategic element of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy. Afghanistan's entry into the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation in April 2007 will not only further strengthen its historical links with the South Asian region, it will also provide the region lasting benefits in free trade and shared economic activities. In this context, several important regional cooperation events have taken place over the past few years, including the Kabul and New Delhi Regional Economic Cooperation Conferences.

However, the central challenge remains the need to develop coordinated measures to implement the programmes formulated in these regional processes. These include addressing key and topical challenges, such as cross-border terrorism, upgradation of law enforcement and governance capacities, facilitation of overland transit as well as expansion of trade and business linkages.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, at the macro-level, our best response to those who seek to drive the international community out of Afghanistan is to display our heightened sense of resolve. We can only succeed by showing that our commitment is long-term and our resolve is unshaken. Most importantly, we must work together in a more effective partnership with the Government of Afghanistan. As the latest report of the UN Secretary-General underlines, strong leadership from the Afghan government must be matched by "greater donor coherence", and a strong commitment from all of us in the neighbourhood. This remains the key to collectively building upon the gains made since the Bonn Conference.

I thank you.

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