AFGHANISTAN ON THE WORLD STAGE

Statements, Addresses, and Articles by

H.E. Zahir Tanin

Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations in New York

December 2006 - September 2009
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AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS IN NEW YORK

DECEMBER 2006 – SEPTEMBER 2009
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Introduction

H.E. Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the United Nations, presented his credentials to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in New York on December 19, 2006. Since then, Ambassador Tanin has been active in many forums both within the United Nations and in the wider international community. His previous experience as a journalist for the BBC and as an academic has allowed him to develop a unique analytical style that offers a fresh perspective on diplomatic issues.

The United Nations has played a critical and central role in the stabilization and rebuilding of Afghanistan since the Taliban
were ousted in 2001. As Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Tanin has represented Afghanistan in the Security Council, in the General Assembly, and in other Committees and Meetings. Further, he has accepted a number of leadership positions in a personal capacity. He has been one of the Vice-Chairs of the Bureau on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People since his tenure began, and was appointed Vice-President of the 63rd General Assembly.

Most recently, Ambassador Tanin was appointed to Chair the Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform on behalf of the President of the 63rd General Assembly. As Chair, he led the successful launch of the negotiations in February 2009, and since then has overseen two successful rounds of negotiations and the beginning of a third.

In his first two and a half years as Permanent Representative, Ambassador Tanin has delivered sixty-four official statements, which are contained here. In addition to these official remarks, Ambassador Tanin has spoken to students and visiting officials, participated in panel discussions, and has been interviewed and published in a multitude of media sources.

Ambassador Tanin’s tenure as Ambassador is occurring during a tumultuous time for Afghanistan: the security situation has become more tenuous, the economic and political situations remain difficult, and the international community has been forced to examine and re-examine its approach and commitment to the country. In a personal and an official capacity, his role within the United Nations has been to forge compromise, encourage open and transparent discussion, and to reinforce the centrality that the needs and concerns of the Afghan people should have within discussions about Afghanistan.

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When I first arrived in Kabul in the winter of 2006, to begin my work as Permanent Representative to the United Nations by accompanying the Security Council on its 2006 mission to Afghanistan, I was engaged by both the challenge and the significant break from my previous experiences in journalism that this opportunity represented. I was profoundly honoured when President Karzai offered me the chance to represent my country, and have since prided myself in my efforts to do what I can to assist in returning Afghanistan to its rightful place among nations.
Since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, I have been able to follow the progress of the international community’s efforts in Afghanistan from the front lines. I have been one of the few Afghans fortunate enough to visit Afghanistan frequently in order to lead teams of BBC journalists in covering the major events of the past eight years. I was present at the Bonn Conference, and I was present to witness and report on the inauguration of President Karzai as head of the new interim government in December 2001. I have returned numerous times since then to follow the changes stimulated by the rebirth of my country. During that first visit and for many years thereafter, I had felt, like many of my Afghan compatriots, that salvation was at hand, and that with the support of the international community and with our own dedication to rebuilding Afghanistan, we could succeed despite the substantial challenges.

But in 2006, when I arrived in Kabul to start my work, it seemed that the feeling was changing. The country was beginning to spiral downwards. The optimism that had carried us through the Bonn Process, the pride and joy of holding our first presidential elections – all of this was starting to dissipate, replaced by a growing sense of concern and unease. The Taliban once again began to threaten Afghanistan’s security, especially in the South and East of the country, and people became interested in preventing Afghanistan from sliding back into war. International efforts had lost a lot of their energy and focus. The war in Iraq and other political crises had diverted essential attention and resources away from the struggle in Afghanistan, and as a result the substantial progress we had achieved after 2001 was vitally threatened by growing
insecurity, fragmentation of aid and priorities, and stagnation and redundancies in development programmes.

And yet Afghans still had faith in the international community. We knew that partnership with our international friends was Afghanistan’s best chance for building a stable and prosperous nation, and that only with stability will Afghanistan be able to protect itself and the world from terrorists and violent extremism of all types. Despite ongoing challenges, and together with UNAMA, NATO, and our other international partners, we have made and continue to make substantial progress towards these aims.

My personal mission in coming to New York has been to bear that same message of commitment and partnership, to facilitate stronger communication between Afghanistan and the international community, and to help all of our friends and partners in the international community better understand Afghanistan and its needs.

Afghanistan’s successes, as well as its ongoing endeavours, impact us all. Under the repressive Taliban regime, the horrific suffering of Afghans, and particularly that of women, has become a stirring reminder of the importance of human rights. The global fight against terrorism began on Afghan territory and on that of its neighbours, in response to the actions of groups operating within the region; and the region remains the frontline in the battle for stability and democracy in the face of extremism and violence. Similar to Bosnia in the 1990s, the international community’s efforts in Afghanistan will define the future of the UN, of NATO and of the current international system. Our experiences there will shape future understandings of development, peacebuilding, and counter-terrorism. Further,
Afghanistan on the World Stage

Afghanistan is also of great geopolitical importance: a historical centre for trade and cultural connections, and located in the midst of an oftentimes troubled region, Afghanistan could provide the political and economic stability the region so desperately needs. Through a strong partnership between Afghans and the international community, this political and economic potential could be formed and realized, and thus Afghanistan could become a shining example of a moderate Islamic state living in peace and prosperity with its neighbours.

The essential role of the UN in defining and coordinating the efforts of the international community in Afghanistan cannot be overstated. Afghanistan hosts the military presence of 42 different nations. 80% of our national budget is constituted by international aid from 62 different donor countries, more than a dozen large international organizations, and about 2000 international and national NGOs, each of which operates with different methods, priorities, and reporting mechanisms. In addition, the Afghan government itself contains numerous Ministries that often have problems communicating or coordinating amongst themselves. The United Nations, and UNAMA in particular, has a central coordinating role to play amidst the multitude of national and international efforts taking place in Afghanistan. Without this effort, aid and services would remain fragmented, and continue to undermine the capacity and growth of the national government.

In a move that developed shortly after my arrival at the United Nations, the international community began to refocus and recommit to efforts in Afghanistan, and began an attempt to reverse the nation’s increasingly negative momentum. There was some debate about how this could best be accomplished.
Some felt the international community should play a larger role in managing the stabilization process in Afghanistan, while others – including the government of Afghanistan – felt that the international community should play a strengthened coordination and support role that would assist the government in developing strong national institutions.

However, by 2007, the international community had begun to agree on the need for better coordination, increased national ownership, and the importance of meeting the expectations of Afghanistan’s government and people. In 2007, I helped organize a Ministerial-Level meeting of the Joint Coordination Monitoring Board on the sidelines of the UN General Debate. It was Chaired jointly by President Karzai and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and attended by all of our closest partners at a high level. This debate in turn led, in 2008, to the appointment of a new UNAMA Special Representative, Kai Eide, as well as a strategic recommitment to Afghanistan during the NATO summit in April, and a financial recommitment at the Paris conference in June.

During 2007 and 2008, debates in the Security Council, the General Assembly, and elsewhere allowed us to constructively compare our understanding of the evolving situation. I was given the opportunity to speak about many aspects of Afghanistan, and to address the concerns of our neighbours, other regional powers, and the rest of the world with regards to our shared objectives. Outside of official UN meetings, I met regularly with the Friends of Afghanistan group and the representatives of other interested nations in order to ensure that Afghanistan’s priorities would be properly understood at all levels of relevant forums. Getting accurate, honest and up-to-
date information became a priority. In November 2008, I once again accompanied the Security Council to Kabul. And in 2009, the Security Council requested that the Secretary-General prepare reports on the Situation in Afghanistan on a quarterly basis instead of semi-annually.

In the past year alone, the Afghan government and the international community have come to an understanding on how the crucial role of the UN could be strengthened without undermining the government of Afghanistan; and we have made substantial progress in defining a common, unified set of priorities for our common work. The international community has focused the mandate of UNAMA on greater coordination responsibilities, both within the international community and with the Afghan government. Most crucially, we agreed that international efforts need to be geared towards supporting and strengthening the capacity of the national government to eventually be fully responsible for security and services for its citizens. Through the work of UNAMA, the international community’s efforts are increasingly becoming aligned with the needs and priorities of the Government and people of Afghanistan, including the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and the recently-signed UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

Of course, my role at the UN goes beyond monitoring and guiding the role of the international community in rebuilding Afghanistan. One major success we have achieved in the past 8 years is the reintroduction of Afghanistan as an important player on the global stage. Afghanistan’s voice is gaining in strength, and as you can tell from the selection of statements offered here, Afghanistan is currently able to constructively engage in a wide
variety of debates. Afghanistan is a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement, a member of the G77 and the OIC, and a proponent of regional cooperation and development in a variety of forums. Afghanistan is also a dedicated advocate for human rights, particularly the rights of women and children, and for the protection of civilians in conflict situations. We are actively engaged in discussions about issues of central global concern, including UN reform, peacebuilding, the Palestinian-Israeli crisis, weapons proliferation, narcotics and crime prevention, and counter-terrorism measures.

In addition, I was honoured by President Miguel d’Escoto Brockmann of the 63rd session, who appointed me to Chair the process of intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform on his behalf. Afghanistan knows better than many how crucial international cooperation is to successfully addressing global crises. It has been a real pleasure to contribute in some way to the effort to reform international institutions to make them more efficient, more representative and more effective in responding to the complex and diverse threats to international peace and security.

As you will see in the following pages, Afghanistan brings its unique perspective and experiences to the table to offer policy recommendations and lessons learned on a wide variety of subjects. And in issues of common interest ranging from climate change to nuclear proliferation, or UN Security Council reform, we take our shared responsibility for intelligent action very seriously.
Acknowledgements

The work presented in this collection is the result of the diligent efforts of many people. Particular mention should be made of my colleagues and dear friends, the diplomats who have served with me in the Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations and whose work appears in this collection. Those who have served with me here in New York, both today and in the past, have each dedicated their time and energy to representing Afghanistan and Afghans every day on issues of great importance. I would like to thank Mr. Mohammed Erfani Ayoob, Mr. Muhammad Wali Naeemi, Mr. Enayatullah Madani, Mr. Seddiq Rasuli, Ms. Mariamme Nadjaf, Mr. Wahidullah Amin, and Mr. Naseer Faiq, for their tireless enthusiasm and able leadership. Further, I must thank all of the colleagues who have worked with us since the beginning of my time as Ambassador, and who are now no longer with the Mission; and though I cannot name all of them, I would at least like to mention Mr. Youssof Ghafoorzai and Mr. Abdul Majid Damishyar, who are still part of the Foreign Ministry of Afghanistan, for their dedication and service. I would also like to acknowledge the entire staff of the Mission who assist me in my duties and keep things running on a daily basis, in particular Mr. Feridun Kul, Ms. May Mariano, Ms. Carol Wang, Ms. Elisabeth Bosley, and Ms. Constance Wilhelm.

Well-deserved thanks also go to the team of experts who have so ably assisted me in my role as Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council reform: Mark van der Velden and Jonas von Freiesleben.
Finally, I would like to thank all of those who have dedicated their time as interns in the Mission, without whom our work would not have run as smoothly or as successfully as it has.
Statements of H.E. Zahir Tanin, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the United Nations
From left to right: Ambassador Tanin, H.E. Miguel d’Escoto Brockmann, President of the General Assembly for its 63rd Session, and H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations.
Statements given at the Security Council
Ambassador Tanin addresses the Security Council at a Debate on the Situation in Afghanistan
Mr. President,

I should like to begin by commending you for the able manner in which you led the work of the Council during the month of January. Allow me to also express my delegation’s appreciation for convening today’s open debate on the important topic of “post-conflict peace-building.”

The establishment of the Peace-building Commission on the 20th of December 2005 marked a major step forward towards achieving a more efficient and effective organization. It also marked a turning point in the efforts of the United Nations to promote peace, stability and development in post-conflict countries and countries emerging from conflict.

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan notes with great satisfaction the launch of the Peace-building Fund on the 11th of November 2006, and the subsequent convening of four country specific meetings on Burundi and Sierra Leone as a clear indication of the international community’s determination to achieve long-term peace and stability in countries emerging from conflict.

As a country emerging from more than two-decades of armed conflict, Afghanistan is well aware of the challenges associated with post-conflict peace building. In a relatively short period of time, we have made significant gains towards a stable and democratic Afghanistan. The convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga; adoption of a new Constitution; and holding of Presidential and Parliamentary elections are but some of our
major accomplishments. We managed to attain these achievements against the backdrop of numerous challenges posed to our peace-building efforts.

We attribute that success to two primary factors: 1) the determination of the Afghan people to live in peace and tranquility, and 2) the sustained support of the international community, in particular the United Nations.

Mr. President,

On the basis of our experience, we have come to realize that effective peace-building requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted strategy, encompassing the essential components of social and economic development, good governance, human rights and the rule of law; national reconciliation, as well as the proactive and sustained engagement of the international community. In this context, we also underscore the importance of the leadership role of the country concerned in the process.

As it was stated by His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, former Secretary General, at the launch of the Peace-building Fund, [and I quote] “Although peace-building is a collective effort, involving the international community, it is the Government of the country concerned that carries the main responsibility for setting priorities and ensuring that the peace process can be sustained. National ownership is the core principle of peace-building, and the restoration of national capacity to build peace must therefore be at the heart of our international efforts” [end of quote].

We are also of the view that creation of mechanisms with a mandate to coordinate and monitor peace-building efforts will be crucial to the overall process.
Mr. President,

The initial stage of post-conflict peace-building necessitates altering the conditions that give rise to a particular conflict. Adopting a passive stance in dealing with dominant threats will not only complicate the situation, but also jeopardize the process in its entirety. As in the case of Afghanistan, continuing terrorist attacks resulting from cross-border infiltration of terrorists along the south and south-eastern parts of the country constitutes the main threat to Afghanistan’s peace building process. These attacks have drastically affected the daily lives of the people and hampered the reconstruction and rehabilitation process.

It is therefore essential to address both internal and external factors that contribute to insecurity in a particular country. In that regard, we also stress the need to enhance the capacity of national security institutions to effectively address prevailing security challenges.

Equally important is the need to accelerate the pace of social and economic development, as security and development are not only interconnected but also mutually reinforcing. We have come to realize that improving security in post-conflict countries will not be achieved by military means alone. It will also require sustained economic development. Successful re-integration of ex-combatants in post-conflict countries will depend largely on the launching of quick impact reconstruction projects and creation of employment opportunities. This will encourage former combatants to re-integrate fully into civilian life and refrain from joining illegal armed groups.

Mr. President,

National reconciliation can be vital to a successful peace-building process. Enhanced dialogue among all segments of
society in the peace-process is necessary to realize national peace-building goals. An inclusive political process; one which ensures equal representation and participation among all national actors and stakeholders will lead to greater confidence-building.

In that regard, allow me to mention that the full participation of all of Afghanistan’s ethnic groups and main political parties in the political process was one of the key factors that contributed to the successful implementation of the Bonn Agreement of 2001.

Finally, Afghanistan emphasizes the need for the international community to maintain an adequate level of aid, including the provision of financial assistance, to countries emerging from conflict, with a view to facilitating a smooth transition from conflict to lasting peace and stability. The political presence of the United Nations through its country team, together with the active vital role of development agencies - under the umbrella of the resident UNDP coordinator - will contribute significantly in that regard.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Afghanistan’s full support to the work of the Peace-building Commission. We remain confident that this newly established Commission will spare no effort to carry out its important and noble task of securing peace and tranquility in post-conflict-countries.

Thank you, Mr. President.

February 20, 2007

Mr. President,

At the outset, I should like to extend, on behalf of my delegation, our congratulations on your assumption of the Presidency of the Security Council during the month of February, and to wish you every success in guiding the work of the Council to a successful conclusion. We wish to also express our appreciation to your delegation for initiating today’s debate, aimed at developing a comprehensive, coherent and integrated approach to security sector reform.

My delegation attaches great importance to the concept of security sector reform as it constitutes one of the key elements in the restoration of peace, stability and normalcy in post-conflict settings. We therefore note with satisfaction the increased level of awareness among the general membership of the United Nations and the international community on security sector reform.

Mr. President,

As a country emerging from more than two-decades of armed conflict, Afghanistan is well aware of the importance of security sector reform (SSR) in ensuring security, recovery, development, as well as improving human rights and the rule of law in post-conflict countries.

Security sector reform has served as the lynchpin to the entire state-building process in Afghanistan. The process has been
also the flagship of the international engagement in rebuilding
Afghanistan’s security forces and law enforcement agencies.
The reform process in Afghanistan has consisted of five pillars,
each supported by a lead country in the following areas: military
reform, police reform, counter-narcotics, judicial reform, and
the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former
combatants.

The disarmament, demobilisation and re-integration (DDR)
process, launched in October 2003, marked the beginning of the
security sector reform process in Afghanistan. In accordance
with the mandate of the program, more than sixty thousand
former combatants were disarmed and demobilized with a view
to creating an environment conducive for the implementation of
the SSR and reconstruction process in the country.

As the second phase of our reform process, we embarked upon
the disbandment of illegal armed groups, aimed at disarming
military units not registered with the Ministry of Defense. We
remain committed to conclude this process by end of 2007 with
the support of our international partners.

SSR has not only facilitated improvements in the security
environment, but also served as a precondition for the formation
of our national army and police. Over 35,000 soldiers of the
national army and 62,000 officers of the national police have
been trained. Our goal is to reach target strength of a 70,000
standing army and 82,000 police force by the end of 2008.

Moreover, additional reforms in the ministries of Defence and
Interior have constituted the main components of the SSR
process in Afghanistan. In this regard, a number of steps have
been taken to implement institutional reforms to achieve greater
professionalism and ensure adherence to democratic principles,
such as accountability, transparency and respect for human
rights.
Despite our progress, we continue to face significant challenges in strengthening the capacity of our security institutions. Lack of resources, modern equipment and low salaries of soldiers have had a drastic impact on the effectiveness of both the national army and police to address the prevailing security challenges in the country. We therefore are of the firm conviction that a sustained level of international engagement in building the capacity of security institutions in post-conflict countries should constitute an essential component of a successful security sector reform process.

I would like to seize this opportunity to express our appreciation for the unwavering support of the international community in assisting the reform process of our security institutions. In this regard, we welcome the recent pledge made by the United States of America to increase its assistance to enhancing the effectiveness and capacity of our national army and police.

Mr. President,

SSR will be a long-term process in Afghanistan. It has served as a means to confront our immediate security challenges. Continuing terrorist attacks conducted by terrorist groups whose sanctuaries are located outside Afghanistan, coupled with the nexus between insecurity and the narcotics trade represent the main challenge to a successful security sector reform process in Afghanistan. In this connection, I would like to acknowledge the pivotal role of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in the implementation of SSR in Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

On the basis of our experience and lessons learned, we would like to refer briefly to some of the issues contained in the concept paper distributed by the Presidency.
First, we must be cognizant of the fact that security sector reform is an endeavour that will be achieved over many years. There is no quick fix solution. Reform of the security sector is not just about disarming former combatants or the “training and equipping” of new army; rather it is a long-term process that requires a particular focus on development. The objective should be to transform former combatants into civilian life. In this regard, it will be of paramount importance to facilitate the provision of long-term income generating projects. Doing so will prevent former combatants from resorting to illegal activities.

Secondly, we are of the view that national ownership is an essential component of a successful and sustainable security sector reform process. As in the case of Afghanistan, SSR has taken place on the basis of consensus among all segments of Afghan society. Indeed, without the lead role and cooperation of the country concerned, efforts to achieve a successful reform process will risk failure.

Thirdly, we stress the need for enhanced coordination between the relevant organs and agencies of the United Nations and other international actors view to achieving a comprehensive, coherent and integrated approach to security sector reform. In this respect, my delegation would welcome the preparation of a report by the Secretary General covering existing UN related activities on security sector reform and a concrete set of recommendations for the future action.

Finally, we believe that security sector reform should be addressed as part of an overall strategy to ensure a lasting peace and stability in countries emerging from conflict. Equal attention must be accorded to building and strengthening state institutions and enhancing the rule of law and good-governance if we are to achieve a successful transition from conflict to peace in post-conflict countries.
Thank you, Mr. President.
Mr. President,

I should like to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Council for the month of March, while expressing my delegation’s appreciation for convening today’s meeting on the Situation in Afghanistan.

My delegation would also like to seize this opportunity to warmly welcome Dr. Tom Koenigs, Special Representative of the Secretary General to Afghanistan, and Mr. Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, back to this Council. We extend our gratitude for their informative briefings.

In addition, we are also pleased to have H.E. Massimo D’Alema, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy, among us in today’s discussion.

My delegation is grateful to the Secretary General for his comprehensive report on the situation in Afghanistan. His report provides an overview of the current situation and the multiple threats that we continue to face alongside our international partners.

Mr. President,

In assessing the current situation in Afghanistan, we must look back to where Afghanistan was five and half years ago. We are well aware of the many achievements that have taken place since 2001 - to which we have referred to on numerous
occasions before this Council. Therefore, I shall limit my comments to some of the most pressing challenges facing both Afghanistan and the international community in our joint endeavor towards achieving lasting peace, stability and prosperity in my country.

Terrorism, narcotics, weak state institutions and the slow pace of economic development are among our main challenges. As such, it would be safe to state that we have jointly underestimated the magnitude of the challenges facing Afghanistan. Therefore, it is ever more obvious that the renewed commitment of the international community is required to address the remaining obstacles and consolidate the gains of the past years.

The prevailing security situation remains forefront among our challenges. Regrettably, we witnessed in 2006 a significant surge in terrorist related activities, occurring mainly along the southern parts of the country. These activities have not only affected the daily lives of the Afghan people, but have also had a significant negative impact on various sectors, including health and education, as well as development and reconstruction projects undertaken with the support of our international partners.

Particularly worrisome was the fact that the Taliban and extremist elements resorted to the abhorrent practice of suicide attacks, a phenomenon relatively unknown in Afghan history. According to our records, an estimated 123 incidents of suicide bombings were carried out during the previous year. These attacks remain a great source of concern to both the Afghan Government and the international community as they terrorize the lives of ordinary people.
Mr. President,

Improving security in Afghanistan will require a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach, one which will address both the internal and regional dimensions of the problem. Internally, our national army and police lack the number of personnel required to effectively combat a resurgent enemy force. Therefore, accelerating the recruitment and training of our security forces will be crucial to achieve our intended goal of a 68,000 standing army and 82,000 police force by the end of 2008. The success of our security institutions to combat effectively a revitalized and well-equipped enemy force will depend largely on the level of international assistance in terms of financial, logistical and technical support.

In this regard, we welcome the recent decision taken by the United States of America, NATO allies and other international partners to increase in their level of financial and military assistance to our security forces.

The regional dimension relates directly to the presence of foreign sanctuaries that train, equip, recruit and indoctrinate extremist fighters carrying out attacks in Afghanistan. As indicated in paragraph five of the Secretary General’s report, [and I quote] “Many attacks appear to have been financed from abroad. According to national and international security sources, the training camps for these attacks are located outside Afghanistan” [end of quote].

It has by now become evident that unless the external sources of insecurity are addressed in a comprehensive and resolute manner, our efforts to achieve a stable and prosperous Afghanistan may go in vain. The threat posed by the Taliban, Al-Qaeda and other extremists is not limited to Afghanistan alone, rather it puts at risk the stability of the region and
beyond. We are pleased to note that this fact has finally been acknowledged by the wider international community.

Mr. President,

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan attaches great importance to the role of regional cooperation in the combat against terrorism. While commending the crucial role of the international community in providing security, we are of the firm conviction that regional cooperation will be indispensable to achieving our shared goal of a stable and prosperous Afghanistan. We welcome, in this respect, the recent arrest of the former Defense Minister of the Taliban by the authorities of the Government of Pakistan. We hope that such measures will continue in a sustainable manner.

Afghanistan continues to maintain high-level and constructive contacts with the Government of Pakistan, with a view to improving security along the border region. These interactions are taking place both within the framework of the Tripartite Commission, as well as on a bilateral basis. Efforts are now underway to convene a cross-border Jirga of tribal and influential figures from both sides of the border. In this connection, we are pleased to inform that the first preparatory meeting of the Jirga Commissions took place on the 14th of March. The next meeting is scheduled to convene in Kabul in the coming month.

We look forward to the up-coming Third Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, scheduled to convene in Islamabad in late 2007. The conference will offer another opportunity to further enhance regional cooperation in achieving security and development in Afghanistan.
Mr. President,

Apart from security, another area which requires due attention is the social and economic development of the country. The inextricable link between development and security necessitates a particular focus on accelerating the pace of implementing development and reconstruction projects throughout the country. This will, in turn, have a positive impact in creating employment opportunities and providing basic services to achieve substantial and sustainable progress in improving the daily lives of the people. In this regard, a particular focus should be accorded to conflict affected areas.

As the principal mechanism mandated to coordinate the efforts of Afghanistan and the international community in the implementation of the interim National Development Strategy and Afghanistan Compact, the Joint Coordinating and Monitoring Board (JCMB) has proven its importance. My delegation, therefore, underscores the need to further strengthen the role of the Board with a view to improving the effectiveness of international aid and promoting greater international engagement.

Mr. President,

Our efforts alone, no matter how intense or skillful, will not be sufficient to enhance the capacity of our State institutions in order to meet the needs of the people. While expressing our sincere appreciation for the support of the international community over the past five and half years, it is worth mentioning that Afghanistan has received far less assistance from the donor community in comparison to other post-conflict countries. We, therefore, reiterate the need for increased and sustained assistance to meet the benchmarks of our National Development Strategy and Afghanistan Compact. In this context, we believe that better coordination of donor assistance
will serve beneficial in achieving greater transparency and tangible results.

Mr. President,

The combat against narcotics remains a top priority of Afghanistan, as it poses a threat to the stability and security in Afghanistan and the region, given its nexus with terrorist-related activities. Alleviating this menace from the region will require a concerted effort by the international community. In our part, we have initiated a series of substantial measures to that effect. The national drug control strategy forms the basis of our counter-narcotics endeavors.

It should be noted that the successful implementation of the strategy will only be realized if we are able to provide other modes of legal economic activity. Regional cooperation will be key in overcoming this common threat. In this regard, we underscore the need for an equal effort on the part of transit and consuming countries, in accordance with the principle of shared responsibility.

Mr. President,

We pay tribute to the United Nations for its central role in leading international efforts to implement the Afghanistan Compact. In this context, we welcome the intention of UNAMA to expand its presence to additional provinces in the country as an important step towards further strengthening UN activities in Afghanistan.

As we have now entered a critical phase in building a prosperous Afghanistan, it is ever more imperative that we maintain the level of international consensus on Afghanistan and to intensify our efforts to overcome the remaining challenges. We look forward to continue working with our
international partners to achieve our shared objectives, and remain committed more than ever to realize the vision set out in the Afghanistan Compact. I would like to also seize this opportunity to express our appreciation for the sustained support of the international community to our efforts aimed at achieving a stable and prosperous Afghanistan.

In conclusion, we would like to thank Dr. Tom Koenigs, Special Representative of the Secretary General to Afghanistan, and the members of the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan for their tireless efforts in carrying out their important mandate.

Thank you, Mr. President.
Mr. President,

As this is the first time that I am taking the floor during this month, I would like to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Council for the month of May. We commend you and your delegation for the excellent manner in which have led the work of the Council. We are also appreciative to your predecessor, Ambassador Emery Jones Parry of the United Kingdom for his skillful leadership of the Council in the previous month.

We are also thankful to the Chairmen of the Counter-terrorism Committees, established pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1267 (1999), 1373 (2001) and 1540 (2004) for their comprehensive briefings on recent activities undertaken to realize the mandate of the respective Committees.

Mr. President,

The adoption of a Global Counter-terrorism Strategy by the General Assembly in September 2006 was a significant step forward towards strengthening the resolve of the international community to address the global threat of international terrorism. In this regard, we are pleased to note that over recent years, the Security Council has increased its vital role in achieving that objective. Such measures have come in the form of adopting additional resolutions of the Council related to international terrorism, including S.C. resolutions 1624, 1730 and 1735.
We welcome such measures and remain committed to work together with member-states and the relevant organs and agencies of the United Nations to ensure the implementation of the relevant resolutions of both the Security Council and General Assembly on this issue.

Mr. President,

Afghanistan remains a prime victim of terrorism, as terrorist attacks committed by the enemies of peace and stability in Afghanistan continues to disrupt the daily lives of our people. The level of terrorist related violence has increased significantly since last year. These attacks are targeting a wide spectrum of society; schoolteachers, clerics, health workers, educational institutions; our national army and police, as well as personnel of the ISAF and coalition forces. Increasingly brutal tactics such as the targeting of civilian populations, suicide bombings and beheadings have become prevalent over recent months. Just two days ago, a vicious suicide attack was carried out in the southern province of Gardez, killing 14 civilians and wounding more than 31 bystanders. This heinous act took place subsequent to two other attacks conducted in Kandahar and Kunduz provinces that took the lives of 10 civilians, 3 German soldiers of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and 11 officers of the Afghan national police. The horrific events of the past few days are a stark reminder of the continuing campaign of the Taliban, Al-Qaeda and other extremists in their effort to destabilize the country.

Defeating terrorism remains a precondition for achieving a peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan. The prevailing security challenges will not weaken our resolve to eliminate this scourge from our society and achieve our stated goals with the support of our international partners.
The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan condemns international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whomever, whenever and whatever purpose. In its firm determination to combat terrorism, the Government of Afghanistan has undertaken a series of substantial measures at the national, regional and international level towards the implementation of the relevant international conventions and resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly dealing with terrorism. We have submitted two national reports to the 1373 Committee and are in the process of preparing a third report. We have also presented a report to the Security Council Committee, established pursuant to resolution 1267.

Mr. President,

The 1267 Committee sanctions regime remains an essential tool of the Security Council in combat against terrorism. Afghanistan welcomes the Committees recent progress in updating its Guidelines and the adoption of Security Council resolutions 1730 which call for the creation of a focal point within the Secretariat to receive delisting requests from States. The adoption of resolution 1735 was another important initiative as it seeks to improve the quality of the consolidated list.

Country visits by Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team of the 1267 Committee is one of the most effective means of monitoring implementation measures and to enhance dialogue with member-states. We were pleased at the outcome of the visit of the Monitoring Team of the 1267 Committee to Kabul, Afghanistan from the 8th - 15h of this month. The Monitoring Team held constructive meetings with senior officials at the Ministries of Defense, Justice, Foreign Affairs and Interior. Additional meetings were held with the head of the National Reconciliation Commission and members of both the National Security Directorate and National Security Council.
to discuss issues related to updating and improving the quality of the consolidated list. We are confident that the recent visit of the Monitoring Team will assist the Committee to update the list so as to reflect new developments in the Afghanistan and the region.

We commend the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) for its continued assistance provided to states to strengthen their counter-terrorism legislation through its Executive Directorate. In this regard, we are pleased to note the intention of the Executive Directorate to conduct a follow-up visit to Kabul, Afghanistan in the coming months. The visit will offer another opportunity for us to provide a first-hand account of our counter-terrorism measures, particularly in the areas of anti-terrorism legislation, border control and practice, as well as police and law enforcement. It will also be useful in assessing and identifying areas where technical assistance is required to strengthen existing counter-terrorism legislation and mechanisms within the relevant institutions and agencies.

Mr. President,

Regional cooperation is indispensable to eliminate terrorism from Afghanistan and the region, given the cross-border nature of our security challenges. Our efforts alone, no matter how robust and effective, will not suffice without an equal effort from regional actors. We continue to maintain constructive cooperation within regional and bilateral mechanisms to effectively combat terrorism in Afghanistan and the region. Consultations continue between Afghanistan and Pakistan within various frameworks. The Ankara Summit between the Heads of State of the two countries which took place from 29-30 April provided another opportunity to strengthen regional cooperation in the combat against terrorism. We remain confident of the Summits successful outcome. We also
welcome the initiative of the G-8 to facilitate enhanced collaboration between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Furthermore, I am also pleased to inform that subsequent to the second preparatory meeting of the Jirga commissions, held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan on the 3rd of May, it was decided that the Peace Jirga of tribal and community leaders from both sides of the border will be convened in the first week of August 2007.

In the face of ongoing threats posed by international terrorists, a more robust effort on the part of member-states, the United Nations, and relevant regional and sub-regional organizations is required to meet the challenge of combating terrorism. My delegation notes with satisfaction the increased coordination between the three counter-terrorism committees of the Council.

To conclude, I would like to express and reaffirm our steadfast commitment in the combat against terrorism. We remain resolute to achieve the full implementation of the relevant resolutions of this Council dealing with terrorism.

Thank you, Mr. President.
Mr. President,

Allow me to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Council for the month of October. I wish to express our appreciation for convening today’s important meeting. We are also thankful to the Special Representative of the Secretary General, Mr. Tom Koenigs, for his detailed briefing.

I should also like to express my delegations appreciation to the Secretary General for his recent report on Afghanistan, which offers a comprehensive overview of the overall situation in the country.

Mr. President,

Less than a month ago, we gathered in the special high-level meeting on Afghanistan, co-hosted by the Secretary General and H.E. President Karzai, prior to the general debate of the 62nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly. The meeting, which brought together Ministers of Foreign Affairs and senior representatives of the 22 member-states of the JCMB and various international organizations, was another opportunity to assess ways of enhancing greater coordination of international efforts for strengthening peace, stability and development in Afghanistan.

We were pleased with the outcome of the meeting, which gave testimony to the overwhelming consensus among member-states on the need to keep Afghanistan among the top priorities of the
international community and the United Nations. We also welcome the unity with which participants reiterated the need for improved strategic coordination in four key areas of security, counter-narcotics, regional cooperation and governance. Such coordination is fundamental for achieving the vision of the Afghanistan Compact.

Mr. President,

Significant gains have been made in Afghanistan since the signing of the Bonn Agreement six years ago. Thanks to the support of this Council and other partners in the international community, Afghanistan no longer serves as a base for international terrorists; rather it has become the front line from which countries have joined hands in the fight against terrorism. We have regained our legitimacy among the responsible members of the international community and continue to make steady progress in consolidating our democratic institutions.

At the same time, we should not lose sight of the fact that daunting challenges continue to face a stable and prosperous Afghanistan. That is why we continue to focus on defeating terrorism, strengthening the rule of law, enhancing the reconstruction process and ridding our society from the menace of narcotics as our top priorities.

Terrorism stands forefront among our challenges. Recent events of the past two weeks are a clear illustration of the ongoing campaign of the enemies of peace in Afghanistan, aimed at destabilizing the situation. In their most recent acts of sheer brutality, terrorists carried out suicide bombings in the frontier town of Spin Boldak and the Afghan capital, targeting civilians and members of the national army and police. The carnage was a stark reminder of the continuing challenge facing the people of Afghanistan to live in peace and security. At least 80 civilians have lost their lives from suicide attacks in
September. Additional attacks have come in the form of increased use of sophisticated explosive devices; abductions, daily attacks on schools, health-centers, government officials and humanitarian aid workers. Terrorists have also resorted to the brutal tactic of launching attacks from civilian populations and use of human shields during counter-terrorism operations which constitutes the main cause of loss of civilian life.

I should like to reaffirm here that such heinous acts will in no way weaken our resolve to achieve our stated goals. That is why our security forces continue to serve in the most difficult of conditions, alongside forces of our international partners to consolidate security throughout the country. Over recent months, we have made much substantial progress in weakening the command and control structure of terrorist networks in Afghanistan. Joint combat operations by Afghan and international forces resulted in the capture and elimination of an unprecedented number of senior-level commanders of the Taliban and extremists. As a case in point, the deaths of Mullah Akhtar Osmani and Mullah Dadullah during combat operations early this year were among numerous achievements in the fight against terrorism. In this regard, we remain concerned over the increased use of foreign extremist elements in the campaign of terror against our people.

We have also taken action to strengthen the sanctions regime against terrorists, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1267. Just last month, Sirajuddin Haqqani, the mastermind behind numerous suicide bombings in various parts of the country was enlisted in the consolidated list of the 1267 Committee, at the request of the Afghan Government.

Mr. President,

Improving overall security in Afghanistan is dependent on a variety of factors. Ensuring a fully efficient and operational
national army and police is vital to our fight against terrorism. Despite substantial progress in reforming our security institutions, and increasing the size of our national army and police, we call for continued assistance for the training and strengthening of our security forces.

Meanwhile, it has also become evident that addressing terrorism and improving security in Afghanistan will not be achieved by military means alone. While the military campaign remains an important pillar in the fight against terrorism, we must also redouble our efforts in all aspects of a comprehensive strategy to achieve long-term security and stability. We must focus greater on expediting the delivery of basic services and create employment opportunities through large-scale reconstruction and development projects to bring real change in the lives of our citizens. In doing so, we will prevent the possibility of subversive elements enjoying local sympathies. In this regard, we call on our international partners to ensure greater military coordination with Afghan security forces during combat operations to prevent loss of civilian life.

Furthermore, more must be done to address terrorism across regional and international dimensions. The presence of terrorist infrastructure outside Afghanistan’s territory is a source of continuing concern to Afghanistan. As it was stated by H.E. President Karzai during his address during the general debate of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly, and I quote “[M]ay I emphasize…that we were the prime victim of terrorism and that terrorism was never, nor is it today, a homegrown phenomenon in Afghanistan. Therefore, this threat can only be overcome if addressed across its regional and international dimensions…Consistent with our expressed belief in the past, we remain convinced that tolerating the presence of sanctuaries and terrorist infrastructure will only broaden the scope of terrorism” [end of quote].
As part of the initiative to ensure long-term stability, Afghanistan continues to focus on reconciliation as a measure to encourage “non-terrorist Taliban” to refrain from subversive activities and join the process of building a prosperous Afghanistan. Such measures, which are welcome by our people, continue within the framework of a comprehensive national reconciliation strategy. In this regard, we are working with the 1267 Committee of the Security Council to update and improve the quality of the consolidate list.

Mr. President,

Regional cooperation is indispensable for success in achieving and stability in Afghanistan. We have witnessed greater consensus in our neighborhood on the notion that a peaceful and stable Afghanistan will serve a precondition for the security and prosperity of all countries of the region. Over the past year, we have maximized our efforts to consolidate relations with our neighbors and the wider region in the areas of security, trade, investment, border cooperation and counter-narcotics. The Sixth meeting of the JCMB, held in Kabul on the 3rd of October, was an important step towards advancing regional cooperation in various key areas.

As a country that once served as a land-bridge connecting cultures, countries and civilisations, Afghanistan is surely but gradually reassuming its role in promoting trade and development in the region. In this regard, I am pleased to announce that we are preparing to host the up-coming international meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in the historic city of Herat on the 19th of this month. This Conference will be the first of its kind in one of the historic provinces of Afghanistan.

The recently convened Afghanistan-Pakistan Jirga just over a month ago was the most recent of numerous initiatives by
Afghanistan to strengthen cooperation between our two countries to jointly address the threat of terrorism in Afghanistan and the region. We have every reason to believe that the gathering will yield the anticipated results. The historic gathering was a complement to ongoing consultations between Pakistan and Afghanistan, within the framework of the Tri-partite Commission.

The issue of narcotics is another major challenge facing Afghanistan. A combination of factors have attributed to why this menace remains a concern to Afghanistan and our international partners. It has become evident that eliminating the scourge of narcotics from our society and region is an endeavor, unattainable by Afghanistan alone. Real progress towards reduction and elimination requires a more robust effort from transit and consuming countries. Greater focus should also be given to break the link between production, trafficking of illegal drugs and financing of terrorist activities.

Mr. President,

In adopting the Afghanistan Compact, we committed to a second phase of cooperation with our international partners to consolidate our achievements. Having reached a turning point in the effort to achieve a stable and prosperous Afghanistan, the time has come for us to redouble our focus on the implementation of the Compact. Our progress in various areas is highlighted in each meeting of the Joint Coordinating Monitoring Board, which remains the principal mechanism facilitating and monitoring cooperation between the international community and Afghanistan. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement. Additional measures are necessary if we are to ensure meeting the goals of the Compact by designated timelines. In this context, we highlight the need to exert greater effort to improve the effectiveness, accountability, and utilisation of development assistance.
While expressing gratitude to our international partners for their assistance to Afghanistan, we emphasize the need to ensure delivery of pledges in a timely manner. Also essential is the need for increased financial assistance for achieving our development goals.

If we are to accomplish tangible results across key pillars of the Compact, we must ensure greater coordination of international assistance to Afghanistan. We call on our international partners to increase their level of coordination and cooperation among themselves and with the Afghan government through periodic meetings of the JCMB. In this regard, we commend the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan for its continuing commitment to implement effective coordination of the international community’s efforts with Afghanistan.

We are also thankful to the Council for its adoption of S.C. Resolution 1776, extending the mandate of the International Security Assistance Forces for an additional year. In this regard, allow me to express our appreciation to all those countries that have committed troops and resources to ISAF for the consolidation of peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan greatly values the ongoing role of the United Nations in the effort to secure peace and stability in the country. We welcome the expansion of UNAMA’s presence to additional parts of the country as a clear sign of the United Nations’ effort to reach out to various parts of the country. I would like to also seize this opportunity to express my delegation’s appreciation to the Secretary General for his personal engagement and commitment to improve the situation in Afghanistan, as illustrated by his visit to Kabul in the month of June and initiative to convene the high-level meeting on Afghanistan on the 23rd of September.
I would like to express our appreciation to our international partners for their ongoing commitment to Afghanistan. We remain confident that, together, we will fulfill our common vision of a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan. In conclusion, we also pay a special tribute to Mr. Tom Koenigs for tireless efforts during his tenure as Special Representative of the Secretary General in Afghanistan. We wish him every success in his future endeavors.

Thank you, Mr. President.
Mr. President,

Allow me to begin by joining previous speakers in congratulating you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Council and wishing you every success in steering the work of the Council to a successful conclusion. We extend our appreciation for convening today’s debate, which provides an opportunity to reaffirm our collective commitment to ensure the protection, rights and well-being of children in armed conflicts.

We also thank Ms Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary General, and Ms Anne Veneman, Executive Director of the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), for their insightful briefings delivered this morning.

Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), a number of important steps have been taken to ensure the protection of children in conflict situations. These include the creation of a monitoring and reporting mechanism to provide accurate and timely information on grave violations against children in war, and the working group for concrete recommendations on child protection in country specific situations. Nevertheless, it remains a grim reality that children continue to be subject to grave violations in conflict situations worldwide.
Mr. President,

Today’s meeting is of particular importance to Afghanistan, as a country that has suffered from decades of armed-conflict, which has had a devastating impact on the most vulnerable part of our population, namely children. Nevertheless, we have achieved considerable progress in promoting and safeguarding the rights of our children since 2001.

We remain firm in our commitment to ensure the security and well-being of our children at every stage of their life. Afghanistan is party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, one on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and the other on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. National legislation has been enacted to implement the Convention and its two Protocols. With the conclusion of our nation-wide child-demobilisation program, 7,444 under-aged soldiers recruited by illegal armed groups have been de-mobilized. As a next step, we have put in place reintegration committees and vocational schools in numerous provinces to reintegrate former soldiers into civil life. In this regard, we call on our international partners to assist us in implementing such programs and facilitate creating employment opportunities for our youth. In addition, strict measures have been adopted to prevent recruitment of soldiers below the age of 18 in our armed forces. Mechanisms are in place in our security institutions to inspect and monitor newly acquired soldiers during both the recruitment and training stage to ensure that the minimum age-requirement for recruitment is met.

Regarding child-trafficking, our government has established a special task force to prevent children from being abducted and falling victim to traffickers. Since 2002, 429 cases of child-trafficking have been reported, from which 329 children have been rescued. Our Penal Code is one among various domestic
laws addressing the abduction and kidnapping of children. Those measures have been complemented by President Karzai’s initiative to create an Inter-Ministerial Commission for the Prevention of Child Trafficking in November 2003, as well as the launch of our National Action Plan to Combat Child Trafficking.

Mr. President,

Despite our progress, terrorism remains a harsh reality in the lives of our children. Terrorists have increased attacks against schools, teachers, school-children and clinics. Attacks on and burning of schools have kept approximately 300,000 children from attending school out of fear of violence. As indicated in the report of the Secretary General, just between August 2006 and July 2007, at least 133 incidents of school attacks were reported. Those attacks, which have occurred mainly in the southern provinces, have led to the closing of 384 of the 721 schools in the provinces of Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan and Zabul.

Terrorists have spared no effort to harm all segments of society as they have increased their attacks in densely populated areas or within the vicinity of public gatherings. The effects of such activity have had a devastating impact on the lives of our children. Just three months ago, a terrorist attack against a Parliamentary delegation in Baghlan province led to the death of more than 50 children while another 90 were left severely wounded. In this context, I express my delegation’s appreciation to the Council for its swift response in condemning the attack on the 8th of November.

Afghanistan’s enemies have resorted to new and brutal tactics. In the most malicious practice conceivable, terrorists are recruiting children and sending them to operate as suicide bombers. As documented in a UNICEF report entitled Child-
Alert - released in October of last year -a 16 year old Afghan boy was ordered to wear a vest full of explosives and detonate it in Ghazni province. The report quotes the boy as saying, [and I quote] “The remote control battery was with me, but I could not do it and threw the battery away…If I didn’t do it, they said I would go to hell,” [end of quote]. In that regard, we remain extremely concerned over the use of religious schools (madrassas) in the region where children are indoctrinated and deceived into carrying out terrorist acts.

We are also concerned about the loss of life and injury suffered by children during counter-terrorism operations, resulting mainly from the Taliban’s use of the civilian population as human shields. In that regard, we call on our international partners to exercise maximum caution and enhance coordination with Afghan security forces during counter-terrorism operations to avoid the loss of civilian life.

Mr. President,

Despite considerable progress in improving the lives of our children, as evident by the reduction in the rate of infant mortality by 85,000 per year, and increased access to health centers throughout the country, the humanitarian situation of our children remains dire, owing to the prevailing security situation. Hundreds of thousands of Afghan children lack basic necessities for a decent life. These include food, water, adequate shelter and sanitation facilities. Their situation is further complicated by the difficulty in accessing supplies and humanitarian assistance. In this regard, we welcome UNICEF’s latest appeal for financial assistance in support of the situation of our children.
Mr. President,

Addressing the protection of children in armed conflict requires the collective commitment of the international community. It also necessitates a comprehensive strategy encompassing key pillars. As part of the effort to safeguard the rights of children, the international community should accord a special focus on poverty alleviation by rendering financial and economic assistance to post-conflict countries so as to enable them to meet their development goals. By doing so, we will meet the preconditions for creating an environment conducive for the sustainable human development and well-being of our children.

My delegation commends the work undertaken by the relevant agencies of the United Nations to protect and promote the rights of children in armed conflict, particularly the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). We are particularly grateful to UNICEF for its ongoing efforts in support of a better and brighter future for our children.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore the commitment of Afghanistan to ensure the protection of the rights of children in general, and we remain committed to support every measure, both within the Council and other relevant organs of the United Nations, to protect the rights of children in armed conflict. After all, by protecting our children, we are securing our future.

Thank you, Mr. President.
Afghanistan on the World Stage
Mr. President,

Allow me to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Council for the month of March, and expressing appreciation for convening this important meeting on the situation in Afghanistan.

Today’s meeting, which takes place just less than a week after the appointment of a new Special Representative of the Secretary General to Afghanistan, and days prior to the Council’s extension of UNAMA’s mandate, offers a good opportunity to discuss the situation in Afghanistan. We congratulate Mr. Kai Eide on his recent appointment and wish him every success in fulfilling the task entrusted to him. We look forward to working closely with him.

We are thankful to the Secretary General for his recent report on the situation in Afghanistan. His report is comprehensive, covering a wide-range of issues, including key political developments, the security and humanitarian situation, and the future activities of UNAMA.

Mr. President,

Increased terrorist attacks by the enemies of Afghanistan have led to some ill-judged and misguided perceptions about the situation in the Afghanistan. Recent remarks of government control or even failure in Afghanistan are products of premature assumptions which have the potential to undermine public support for efforts to achieve lasting peace and security in the
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country. We should stay the course with firm determination, and prevent security nuances from weakening our resolve to achieve our shared goals.

Let us not forget that we, Afghanistan and our international partners, have made undeniable gains towards a strong, stable and democratic Afghanistan. By all standards, the achievements made thus far reflect tremendous success in Afghanistan. Today a greater part of Afghanistan is secure from terrorism and violence. The fight against terrorists and extremists continues. Thanks to the support of our international partners, our security forces have become stronger and more effective. The Afghan National Army has reached 58,000 and assumed a greater role in the fight against terrorists seeking to destabilize Afghanistan and the region. With the support of our international partners we have dismantled more than 120 terrorist bases of operations and apprehended 1,000 terrorists, including foreigners. Among the captured are elite commanders of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda’s rank and file, as well as the culprits of recent terrorist attacks. They include terrorists who carried out the attack on the Serena Hotel on the 14th of January, and the suicide bombings in Kandahar that took place last month.

Mr. President,

In spite of our achievements, significant challenges remain. Providing security for our people is not only our main objective, but also our primary challenge. Terrorists have increased attacks against civilians, schools, religious figures, security forces and international partners. They have also broadened the scope of their activities in the region. New violent fronts have been opened. Attacks which have come by “hit and run” tactics should not be seen as a sign of the enemy’s strength, but rather of their frustration resulting from the inability to engage in direct battles. As it was stated in paragraph 19 of the Secretary
General’s report, [and I quote] “The superiority of Afghan and international forces in conventional battles has forced opposing groups to adopt small-scale asymmetric tactics largely aimed at Afghan National Security Forces, and in some cases, civilians: improvised explosive devices, suicide attacks, assassinations, and abductions” [end of quote].

The government of Afghanistan will spare no effort to improve security for its people. In this regard, we continue to maintain a comprehensive strategy that contains both military and political dimensions. While the military campaign remains the centerpiece of our efforts to defeat terrorists and consolidate security, we are according greater attention to political outreach and furthering the national reconciliation process. We reiterate our call to individuals with past grievances to reject violence, abide by the constitution, and join their fellow compatriots in rebuilding their country. In this connection, we welcome UNAMA’s readiness to extend its good offices to support reconciliation efforts, at the request of the Afghan government.

Mr. President,

The interconnected challenges facing Afghanistan requires mutually reinforcing efforts to consolidate gains in the areas of security, governance, development and counter-narcotics. Strengthening governance and combating corruption and narcotics remain among our top priorities. We have initiated new measures to improve governance at the provincial and local levels. As indicated in the report of the Secretary General, the Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG) has strengthened the connection of the provincial administrations to the central government. It has also led to progress in a variety of areas at the provincial and district levels, including sustainable delivery of basic services to local communities, disbandment of illegal armed groups, police reform and counter-narcotics.
The Government of Afghanistan has taken numerous measures to combat corruption. These include the creation of an Inter-Institutional Commission, headed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, to address corruption in the public sector; development of the draft of our National Anti-Corruption Strategy, and the signing of the UN Convention against Corruption in August 2007. Nevertheless, the challenge of fighting corruption and strengthening the rule of law requires time and resources. We welcome UNAMA’s new emphasis in support of our efforts to strengthen the governance and the rule of law.

Mr. President,

As the report of the Secretary General asserts, our counter narcotics efforts have gained momentum. Following the increase in cultivation and production of opium in 2007, we have taken a series of additional measures to expedite the implementation of our National Drug Control Strategy. In the recent meeting of the JCMB in Tokyo, we reached consensus with our international partners on areas where immediate action should be taken. We prioritized countering narcotics as a key pillar of our Policy Advisory Group, which aims to improve security in six provinces with the highest level of violence. In October of last year, we designated 50,000 hectares as the national eradication target for 2008. In addition, to address the reinforcing link between terrorism and narcotics, we will provide force protection for eradication operations. Among other measures taken for a more effective counter-narcotics effort, our National Assembly confirmed the candidate for the post of Minister of Counter-Narcotics just two weeks ago.

Mr. President,

Despite our challenges, Afghanistan is continuing its reconstruction and social and economic development. Today,
more than 85 percent of the population is covered with basic package of health services. Progress in the education sector has enabled nearly six million children access to education. Our legal economy has grown by an average of 12 percent over the past four years, and our GDP per capita has approximately doubled. Five million Afghans have returned home in hope of a promising future, and more than 1,471 kilometers of roads have been built and 737 kilometers remain under construction. In the area of human rights, our constitution has enabled our citizens to enjoy unprecedented rights. In accordance with our National Action Plan for Women (NAPWA), Afghan women continue to assume a greater role in the social, political and economic life of the country. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the challenges in various sectors, and remain committed to address them resolutely.

To consolidate and advance our gains, we will finalize the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS) in the weeks to come. We welcome the up-coming Paris Conference in June 2008, at which we will launch the ANDS, review the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact and discuss the way forward with our international partners. We are working closely with the government of France in preparation of the Conference.

Mr. President,

The people of Afghanistan continue to live under difficult humanitarian conditions. The situation has exacerbated with the onset of the harshest winter conditions in more than thirty years, which caused more than 900 fatalities, while hundreds of people suffered from severe frostbite. The severe weather also devastated our livestock, which is the main source of livelihood for vulnerable families in remote parts of Afghanistan. While expressing gratitude to the humanitarian community for
providing emergency aid in the worst-affected provinces, we appeal for urgent delivery of additional humanitarian assistance.

The recent winter catastrophe illustrates the need for greater coordination of international humanitarian assistance to better address the humanitarian needs of our people. In this connection, we welcome UNAMA’s continued coordinating role to ensure timely and effective delivery of humanitarian assistance, as well as its readiness to assist the government of Afghanistan to create conditions conducive for the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of our fellow Afghans from abroad.

Mr. President,

The role of the United Nations remains vital for the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact. We look forward to the adoption of the resolution that will extend the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) in the coming days. The extension of the mandate will reflect the continuing commitment of the UN and the international community to Afghanistan. We are hopeful that it will also mark the beginning of a strengthened, structured and more effective UN role in Afghanistan. The need for greater coordination of the international community’s reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan is ever more evident. In this regard, we underscore the importance of an enhanced coordinating role by the UN to combine the international community’s assistance to Afghanistan into a cross-alliance effort. Such coordination is necessary to improve the effectiveness, and efficiency of international assistance to Afghanistan.

Before concluding, I would like to express my appreciation to the United Nations and the international community for its commitment to achieve lasting peace, security and stability in Afghanistan. Together, we have come a long way, but our
mission has yet to be accomplished. With greater coordination and closer cooperation, we will successfully conclude the journey that we jointly embarked upon six years ago.

Thank you, Mr. President.
Mr. President,

My delegation is pleased to see your Excellency Mr. David Miliband the Foreign Secretary of the UK chair today’s Security Council meeting. Allow me to express my delegation’s appreciation to you for organizing today’s important and timely open debate of the Security Council to consider the challenges facing the international community in stabilizing countries recovering from conflict and delivering sustainable peace.

We are also thankful for the concept paper on the subject which is certainly a comprehensive document that articulates the realities of dealing with situations in countries emerging from conflict.

I am certain that the outcome of this debate will greatly benefit nations undergoing post-conflict stabilization and the peace-building process as well as the UN.

Emerging from more than two decades of armed conflict, Afghanistan is well aware of the challenges associated with post-conflict stabilization efforts.

Almost seven years ago following the defeat of the Taliban, in December 2001, the Bonn Agreement laid out the path towards political transition in Afghanistan. It was clear from the outset that the stabilization of Afghanistan in the post-Taliban period was not an easy task. As a result of long wars and foreign
occupations, Afghanistan had become a failed state and a broken society.

In fact, about seven years ago, Afghanistan was:

- A geography without a state,
- A stage for factional wars imposed by invaders and outsiders,
- A safe haven for international terrorism and extremism,
- A land where the people live in constant fear of bandits and thugs,
- And a country where its citizens were deprived of all their rights.
- In addition more than half of its population, being female, could not go to school, work or even attain simple medical care.

The collapse of the state led to nation-wide insecurity. Millions left the country or became internally displaced and the social trust had been eroded. People reverted to traditional forms of mutual support such as tribal and ethnic alliances, which led to an increasing societal fragmentation.

In a country where agriculture was the chief engine of the economy, illicit drugs became the main source of income; the land began to fuel the war rather than to feed the people.

Since the Bonn Agreement, in cooperation with the international community, we have come a long way in overcoming the enormous challenges of building the foundation of a new political system aimed at promoting long term stability. We have adopted a new constitution and held democratic presidential and parliamentary elections in 2004 and 2005, supported overwhelmingly by all the people of Afghanistan.
To ensure security, recovery and development, we embarked on security sector reform which serves as the lynchpin of the entire state-building process in the country. Thanks to the support of our international partners our security forces have become stronger and effective. Our national army has now reached 76,000 and assumed a greater role in the fight against terrorists seeking to destabilize Afghanistan and the region.

Five years after the Bonn Agreement, in February 2006, the Afghan government and the international community came together in London to design a new roadmap to solidify our achievements and further empower Afghanistan to realize a sustainable peace and development.

Mr. President,

Despite all these remarkable gains, we still face challenges that pose a threat to our long term stability. There are at least four major challenges to peace and stability in Afghanistan: terrorism, narcotics, weakness of governance, and poverty. These challenges are interlinked and an integral part of the same threat. In dealing with these challenges, we realize that effective stabilization efforts in post-conflict situations require a comprehensive and multi-faceted strategy, encompassing the essential components of social and economic development, good governance, human rights, the rule of law, and national reconciliation. Such an approach demands a pro-active and sustained engagement of the international community in the process.

Mr. President,

From the beginning of the Bonn process in Afghanistan, the U.N. has played a central role in bringing together the international community to help Afghanistan’s transition from conflict to peace, stability and democracy.
During the course of the last year, a new momentum was built to reinvigorate the role of the UN in Afghanistan. The appointment of a new SRSG was an important step. Today we have a broad consensus that the UN should focus on its role as lead coordinator, essential for reenergizing efforts on stabilization. The success of the UN in delivering its mandate relies on uniting the efforts of all international actors including the donor community, NATO, EU, regional countries, international financial institutions, and NGOs in supporting the government and people of Afghanistan in their struggle for peace, stability and progress.

The key elements for success of the UN in its role entail full cooperation of all parties to be coordinated, as well as the mandate, resources and an adequate staff on the ground.

The role of the U.N. in Afghanistan, similar to other post-conflict situations, is to facilitate the stabilization efforts including supporting institutional building and bridging the international community with the government and people. While state-building is a collective effort in post-conflict countries, the national ownership of the process is the core principle. Given the enabling role of the international community, it is essential to invest more in establishing capable and functioning institutions. To achieve this we need to build national capacity to deal successfully with all challenges which arise during the post-conflict stabilization. As experience shows an “effective state-building is like a spider-web; in that they work best when built by the spiders themselves.”

Mr. President,

The success of the international community and national government in the process of recovery from the conflict, as we have learned from our experiences, is closely linked with effective use of resources and aid. It is paramount that the aid
be need driven not supply driven. A coordinating strategy should reflect the principles of the aid effectiveness and successful delivery of aid that are aimed at improving the situation of the country and the people.

Mr. President,

In Afghanistan, the enemies of peace and stability will continue their attempt to disrupt the efforts of the government and the people as well as our international partners for establishing a stable, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan. However we are confident that these actions will not succeed in interfering with our long term goal of building a new Afghanistan. In this fight what we need is the continuing commitment of the international community, time and resources.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, Mr. President, I am confident that this debate will help the international community join their efforts more than ever to deal with the challenges of post-conflict stabilization, and to address the challenges and enhance the coordinating role of the UN.

Thank you Mr. President.
Mr. President,

Let me begin by expressing my delegation’s gratitude to you for organizing today’s open debate on protection of civilians in armed conflict. Last week’s debate on post-conflict stabilization was very productive and we believe that today’s topic is inextricably linked to stabilization and peace building. The protection of civilians is a very important issue to Afghanistan as the Taliban and al-Qaeda continue their heinous acts to disrupt the efforts of the government and international forces for establishing a stable, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan.

In our endeavor towards developing a democratic state, it is essential that all citizens feel their human rights are secure and everyone is treated with dignity and respect. The most basic human right is the right to live in security but too often people in Afghanistan are deprived of this fundamental right by terrorists.

Indiscriminate and brutal terrorist attacks are carried out in Afghanistan particularly, in the southern part of the country as terrorists use fear-tactics to undermine people’s trust in their government and the international community. Whether in the form of roadside bombings, suicide attacks, or various other heartless killings - the acts of violence committed against civilians by the Taliban and Al-Qaeda are premeditated. They are designed to weaken the determination of the international
community to support Afghanistan and the trust the government is trying to build with our citizens.

Mr. President,

The enemies of Afghanistan intentionally seize opportunities to use civilians in combat in order to complicate the response of international and national security forces. The insurgents attack remote villages populated by peaceful farmers and laborers. They take shelter in or around homes and buildings, using them to attack security forces, in an attempt to force combat in civilian areas. Local residents are inevitably caught in the middle. The Afghan government and international forces spare no effort to avoid civilian casualties, while terrorists use civilians as human shields. The suicide attacks are the clear manifestation of deliberate killing of innocent people. In fact, they thrive on a casual disregard for the sanctity of human life and the enmity widespread violence breeds.

Although it is very difficult to avoid collateral damage, an integral part of military planning is to avoid harming civilians. The number of civilian casualties is lower than often reported. Also, we are not certain about the accuracy of casualty estimates presented by international organizations as they are mainly based on reports that in many cases latter proved to be exaggerated. In fact we face an enemy without a uniform or identity badge, indistinguishable from local people. As a result, a dead Talib may be perceived as a civilian death if he is an Afghan.

Mr. President,

Despite the complexity of the issue, the protection of civilians is of the highest priority for our government. Our forces act with the utmost precaution during combat in civilian areas. Furthermore, international and Afghan forces have recently
implemented new methods including the use of smaller bombs and revised the use of other weaponries. A new mechanism of coordination between ISAF and our security forces has been established in the eastern and southern zones, which allows us to carefully plan operations and avoid collateral damage.

Mr. President,

Thanks to these methods and mechanisms, my delegation is happy to report that the number of civilian casualties and airstrikes during counter-terrorist operations has decreased considerably since 2007. However, the government of Afghanistan is deeply concerned with any loss of civilian life, and urges the international community to exercise utmost caution during combat operations.

Mr. President,

Although we have come a long way, much more needs to be done both in Afghanistan and beyond. Unfortunately, where there is armed conflict, there will be casualties - it is a sad and painful truth. In order to enjoy the popular support of the people, any use of force by the government requires an elaborate moral justification. Insurgents and terrorists take advantage of this necessity with acts of violence that erect a barrier of fear and mistrust between the people and their government. Nonetheless, the most important question in front of us is how to minimize civilian casualties in armed conflict. The international community and the government of Afghanistan have a common understanding that it is imperative to enhance coordination between national governments and international organizations in a view to protect civilians.
Mr. President,

We are in a battle to win hearts and minds in Afghanistan. Terrorists are ruthless and irresponsible by nature: they intentionally exploit our sense of fairness. However, our humanity is not a weakness. In fact, it is the very foundation of our society. Hence it is crucial that we act upon what we have learned here today to secure the lives of civilians and engage local communities who are at the front lines of the struggle. After all, the diplomatic efforts here, and the counter-terrorist operations on the ground have a common goal: to protect the peoples of our nations without whom there would be nothing to fight for.

Thank you, Mr. President.
Mr. President,

At the outset I would like to thank the United States for organizing this open debate on a very important protection gap, namely sexual and gender based violence in armed conflict and post conflict situations.

Mr. President,

In situations of armed conflict and periods of instability, armed groups often use violence against civilians, especially women, as a deliberate tactic of war. In Afghanistan, the devastating impacts of three decades of armed conflict have particularly affected the most vulnerable part of our population, namely women and children. During this period, the basic rights of Afghan women have been undermined, even denied due to the vicious cycle of violence which allowed groups with power to act with impunity in the face of women’s vulnerability. Under the Taliban’s regime, Afghanistan was a graveyard for human and women’s rights where barbaric atrocities against women constantly occurred. No one can forget the images of the innocent Afghan women being slaughtered in Kabul’s stadium and those images of the inhuman Taliban bludgeoning women in the streets for so called un-virtuous behavior.

Today the results of widespread violence during years of conflict are still affecting private and public spheres of women’s life in Afghanistan.
Mr. President,

In several armed conflict situations, acts of sexual and gender based violence were used to humiliate, and forcibly relocate civilian members of a community or ethnic group. In Afghanistan, sexual violence was not a predominant method employed by armed groups in conflict, due to the strong cultural bounds of the society, however the use of sexual violence was used by some individuals and groups as an instrument of war.

Afghanistan recognizes that sexual and gender based violence is a threat to international peace and security and condemns all sexual and gender based violence committed against civilians in conflict affected situations. We would also like to underscore the necessity of acknowledging that in armed and post conflict countries, the dimension of violence used against women has multiple aspects that extend beyond a sexual nature.

Mr. President,

It has been eight years since the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1325 and about seven years since the fall of the barbaric regime of the Taliban and the beginning of the peace process, democratization, and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. Our vision is a peaceful and progressive nation where women and men enjoy security, equal rights, and opportunities in all spheres of life.

The Government of Afghanistan has made considerable achievements in protecting women from violence and assuring a secure environment where their rights are protected, and their participation in decisions making bodies and in the peace building process is guaranteed.

Afghanistan has undertaken several initiatives in addressing violence against women as embodied in the Constitution, the
MDGs, the Afghanistan Compact, the ANDS - recently launched in Paris - and the international treaties. The Afghan Ministry of Women’s Affairs is leading our efforts in achieving this goal and is chairing the Ministerial Task Force created in 2005 to eliminate all forms of violence against women. We would like to seize this opportunity to express our gratitude to all organizations including UN agencies, especially UNIFEM as well as the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), for assisting us in advancing the status of Afghan women.

Mr. President,

Progress in the process of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants and disbanding armed groups has contributed to minimizing violence against civilian particularly women and children. However, the successful completion of the process will help to create an environment where women will be empowered to exercise their rights.

The Afghan Government recognizes the security sector reform as crucial to strengthen the rule of law, to ensure the protection of women’s rights, to improve law enforcement bodies and to end the culture of impunity. But at the same time, we would like to underscore the need for women to participate in the security sector reform process. In this regard, initial steps have been taken by the Ministry of Interior to increase the recruitment of female law-enforcement officers, and to provide gender-sensitivity training in the police academy. Police Family Response Units are staffed by women who are trained to deal with domestic violence and to respond to female victims of crime.
Mr. President,

The escalation of violence and insecurity in some parts of the country, as a result of the terrorist activities carried out by the Taliban and Al Qaeda, hinders the implementation of the rule of law and consequently makes women vulnerable to all forms of violence.

Different methods of violence against women are used by the Taliban and Al Qaeda to intimidate, terrorize, and force Afghan women to retreat from public activities and limit their access to health care, education, justice and economic and social endeavors, especially in the southern and eastern parts of Afghanistan.

The terrorist campaign of the Taliban and Al Qaeda’s has particularly affected girl’s school enrollment and attendance, schools are burned and female teachers and students are attacked and threatened.

The legacy of the long conflict including access to weapons, difficulty in stabilization efforts and the rampant poverty is reflected in self immolation, forced marriage, domestic and other forms of violence in some parts of the country. In order to be successful in our efforts to eliminate these practices, we request the international community to continue their assistance to strengthening our national capacities in ensuring a secure environment, improving economic and social conditions and implementing human rights and the rule of law in Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

Protection of civilians, including women, is highlighted as an inherent part of the ISAF - NATO led mission operating in Afghanistan. We would like to emphasize the need to integrate specific strategies for the better protection of women from all
forms of violence including sexual violence. We also encourage peacekeeping forces to receive gender sensitivity pre-deployment training.

Mr. President,

Sustainable peace in Afghanistan cannot be achieved without the participation of half of its population, namely Afghan women. Afghanistan recognizes the importance of women’s positive contribution to conflict prevention, conflict resolution and the promotion of peace and security. As Secretary General Ban Ki-moon justly stated this morning, the most effective way to combat violence against women is to make women messengers of peace instead of victims of violence. This reflects our vision for Afghan Women.

Thank you for your attention.
Mr. President,

Allow me to begin by expressing my delegation’s gratitude to Viet Nam’s Presidency for convening today’s meeting on Children and Armed Conflict. This meeting provides an opportunity to renew our strong commitment in ensuring the protection and rights of children in armed conflict as well as reviewing progress made in this respect.

We would also like to express our appreciation to Ms Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary General for children and armed conflict, for her visit to Afghanistan and comprehensive statement.

Mr. President,

All children have the same needs and share the same dreams; they represent the future of our societies and mirror the state they live in. The Government of Afghanistan is still making efforts to rebuild its country devastated by 30 years of war which dramatically affected the lives of our children, particularly girls. The major victims of the war in Afghanistan are our children; years of conflict in our country have destroyed basic necessities of life such as schools, health care, adequate shelter, water and food, as well as disrupted family relationships. It has also created stigma and post-traumatic distress, generated a spirit of pessimistic outlook about their future.
Afghanistan is strongly committed to reversing the impact of war on children and fulfilling its obligation towards the protection of children. The improvement of the situation of Afghan children and comprehensive protection of their rights is an essential precondition for the sustainable development of our state. It will also lay a solid foundation for our next generation to live in peace, prosperity and enjoy their human rights. Our vision for ensuring the protection and well being of our children is to develop an environment that provides security, guarantee economic and social opportunities and respect the rule of law.

We have achieved considerable progress towards improving the status of children since 2001. Nevertheless today we are facing critical security challenges that jeopardize the gains made in the past 7 years and undermine our collective efforts in improving the living conditions of our children towards a promising and bright future.

Mr. President,

Terrorism constitutes a major threat and drastically affects the daily lives of our people particularly children. The deterioration of the security situation in Afghanistan is the product of the surge of terrorist activities carried out by Al Qaida, Taliban and other associated armed groups. Terrorists have increased attacks in our territory, using barbaric acts and methods including the use of car bombs, suicide attacks and improvised explosive devices directed at national and international forces. These attacks deliberately target densely populated areas where children are the prime victims.

Mr. President,

The Taliban are using the most atrocious practice conceivable to conduct their subversive operations. Terrorists are recruiting, training, exploiting children as combatants and sending them to
operate as suicide bombers. As Afghan and international security forces become more alerted at recognizing suicide attackers, children are used because they are not generally suspected. It also forms an effective instrument of psychological warfare as the specter of the “child attacker” is as terrifying as it incomprehensible.

The intensification of Taliban intimidation campaign through burning of schools and clinics, disseminating of threatening night notes, attacking of teachers, and school-children has created an atmosphere of terror and traumatizes children from going to schools and ruin their future. Furthermore, it undermines our efforts in achieving development goals aimed at improving the living conditions of our citizens including children and provides a gloomy future for our people.

The state of hopelessness resulting from years of living in conflict and from poor socio-economical conditions, supported by the brainwash indoctrination provided in madrassas across our borders are creating favorable conditions for recruitment and training of innocent children to target a wide spectrum of Afghan and international civilian and military personnel. We are deeply concerned about the loss of rising number of children killed and injured by the Taliban and other terrorist foreign groups.

We would also like to express our grave concern about the loss of lives and injuries of children during counter-terrorism operations. In that regard, we call on our international partners to exercise maximum caution and enhance coordination with Afghan security forces during operations to avoid the loss of civilian life and ensure the safety and physical integrity of children.
Mr. President,

The protection of children in armed conflict is one of the most daunting humanitarian and security challenges facing the International Community today. Addressing the socio economic needs of children in armed conflict and ensuring their rights requires an integrated strategy with a special focus on poverty alleviation especially among the most vulnerable segment of our society including widows and orphans. Successful implementation of such a strategy requires full cooperation and coordination between the Government of Afghanistan and development partners as well as the United Nations agencies. We would like to call on all donor countries and development agencies to assist us achieve sustainable development, poverty eradication, and good governance.

Thank you, Mr. President.
Mr. President,

Allow me to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the Presidency of this Council for this month of October. We wish you every success. We also extend our appreciation for the convening of today’s important debate and welcome the Secretary General’s report on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security. We are also grateful for Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary General, for his insightful briefings this morning.

Mr. President,

Seven years ago this month, an unprecedented war was launched—a war not against a country, not against a state, but against the amorphous scourge of terrorism that was threatening to undermine security in all reaches of the world. This war was unavoidable, inevitable, and absolutely necessary.

Now, in 2008, despite hard work on the part of international coalition forces and Afghans alike, terrorism appears to be on the rise again. The Taliban burn down schools, stamp out reconstruction, and butcher civilians. They attack roads and regions around Kabul, hampering international humanitarian relief. Ordinary people are increasingly their targets. Their belligerence against true progress and security in Afghanistan is continuous, boundless and cruel. To push back against this scourge, we must first understand the changes in the sources and the strategy of the threat since 2001.
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The Government of Afghanistan, first, recognizes that the Taliban is a heterogeneous group, some members of which may be willing to participate in the peace process. Our government will keep the door open for these members.

Second, the Government of Afghanistan acknowledges the evolving strategy of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. While the world’s attention was focused within the borders of Afghanistan, the Taliban and al-Qaeda intensified operations in the FATA border regions of Pakistan. They now hope to use the timing of the elections in the United States and Afghanistan to force a change in international commitment in Afghanistan.

Third, the Taliban are fighting a war of perception. They seek to instill uncertainty about prospects for peace in Afghanistan by launching attacks of a spectacular nature—attacks that the media and the news can easily seize and broadcast.

Mr. President,

We must also recognize that security is not confined to military security. Real security is established by improvement in the day-to-day lives of Afghans: measured by improvement in humanitarian efforts, in governance and rule of law, in counter-narcotics, in the upcoming elections, in a strong army and police, and in a strong and sustainable economy.

First, the humanitarian situation regarding the food shortage in Afghanistan needs immediate attention from the international community, especially as winter approaches. This crisis is the first topic discussed and pursued in every Afghanistan cabinet meeting this year. Our government hopes that the world heeds the UN’s call for increased international relief efforts.

Secondly, three days ago, our government took a crucial step toward improving governance and eliminating corruption: H.E.
President Karzai announced the reshuffling of the cabinet, including the appointment of a new interior minister. This key move accompanies the creation of High Office of Oversight for Anti-Corruption and special anti-corruption police and prosecutors. We are also strengthening local governance through new appointments, trainings of local administrators, and new incentives for accountability.

Third, counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan are seeing the beginning of a breakthrough. More than half of provinces are poppy-free. The few remaining centers of poppy cultivation are in the insecure areas of Afghanistan, where international and government efforts have been unable to put down real roots. The Government of Afghanistan applauds NATO ISAF forces’ recent decision to target opium factories for the first time.

Fourth, our government understands the tremendous importance of secure, transparent, timely and credible presidential elections in the summer of 2009. There is no alternative to elections in ensuring the legitimacy of the peace process in Afghanistan. To this end, we have drafted legislation on the Independent Election Commission (IEC) and held our first day of registration last week. However, our government also cautions that the elections require a process of sustained long-term efforts, and hopes that that we ensure that the political process acts as a unifying, rather than a divisive, force for Afghanistan.

Fifth, the Afghan National Army has accomplished significant improvements in control and command, and plans are in place to increase its numbers from 75,000 to 134,000 by 2010. The Afghan National Police has also increased its activity and is the focus of rank and pay reform. Sixth, the Government of Afghanistan is strongly dedicated to improving the economic livelihood of every Afghan. We are building roads, schools and clinics in more than 2/3 of villages through the National
Solidarity Program. As a testament to our efforts, the GDP has tripled since 2001.

In short, the Government of Afghanistan is making progress on many fronts. However, our goals are so ambitious as to need strong and sustained international support to be fully realized.

Mr. President,

The way forward in Afghanistan is to recognize that abandonment and failure are not options. We must stop engaging in the wrong debate of whether or not we will fail—we must instead focus on the right debate, on how we can succeed. This right debate acknowledges the absolute necessity for the following four items: a regional solution, sustained international commitment, appropriate strategies in this war of perceptions, and lastly, a consideration of all components important to a successful political solution to Afghanistan’s challenges.

First, it is now clear that the Taliban is a regional threat. Its base of operations is no longer in Afghanistan, but in the border regions of FATA. We have found in the new President of Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Asif Ali Zardari, a friend and trusted leader to address terrorism together. Our Foreign Minister, H.E. Dr. Rangin Dadfar Spanta, will visit Pakistan on October 22nd to further this collaboration and discuss long-term strategic relations between two countries. However, the international community also has the responsibility to continue this momentum between the elected government of Pakistan and Afghanistan by boosting joint efforts to eradicate the threat of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

Second, the Government of Afghanistan applauds the international community for its reinvigorated attention on Afghanistan. We commend Mr. Kai Eide’s leadership to coordinate the efforts of the international community. Only six
months into his term, we are seeing positive results from the stronger collaboration between our government and the UN. In addition, the Bucharest summit and Paris conference produced a strong consensus that the international community will stay engaged in Afghanistan as long as is necessary, verifying international aid pledges that totaled more than $20 billion. In the seven years since international forces first entered Afghanistan, international attention has often flagged. But, this new relationship with the UN, the Bucharest consensus and the Paris momentum are all indications that international attention is refocused. Let us sustain this attention and not lose focus again.

The third important aspect of the way forward is a full consideration of how to wage a smarter war of perception. Three things need to be done:

1. We should be careful with what we say about Afghanistan. Media outlets move with astonishing speed in Afghanistan and word of mouth carries any pessimistic news quickly to the Afghan people. The Taliban have used some recent statements and reports as a powerful weapon to convince the Afghan people that the international community’s resolve is wavering. This is undeniably harmful for our operations and efforts forward in Afghanistan.

2. We must not underestimate our successes. The GDP of Afghanistan has tripled since 2001. In two-thirds of Afghanistan, there is no conflict and millions of Afghans work and live their lives peacefully. The international community must not under-report the many success stories in Afghanistan.

3. Our assessment and reports must be stronger in reporting destruction and brutality caused by the Taliban. We build a school in six months; they burn it down in six minutes. The
Taliban are, in fact, responsible for the majority of civilian casualties in Afghanistan this year.

The last aspect of the way forward is in regards to the Secretary General’s “political surge” in Afghanistan. Such political surge must consider all these components to be successful:

1. Reconciliation efforts must be better framed both inside and outside of Afghanistan. Currently, these reconciliation efforts are portrayed as an “alternative” to the efforts of the last seven years. In fact, reconciliation is but another tool in our arsenal to ensure progress is continued towards a stable Afghanistan. From members of the Ulama to tribal leaders, strong forces desire peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan. Thus, important steps have been taken in recent months to begin this reconciliation process.

2. A “political surge” includes not only reconciliation with interested parties, but also a strengthening of relationships with Afghan communities themselves. This outreach of the Government of Afghanistan will be extended to both communities under Taliban influence and those in secure, peaceful regions.

3. A political surge cannot afford to neglect the importance of military action. Afghanistan must be able to negotiate from a position of strength, which depends on the strong backing of international troops and the Afghan National Army. An increase in international troops is an essential and necessary first step to counter terrorist activities. However, these troops must also be willing to face enemies and conduct operations thoroughly. They should address responsibly the issue of civilian casualties that is a challenge to our goal of winning the Afghan people’s hearts and minds.
Mr. President,

We face at this time a critical opportunity to turn the tide against forces of insecurity and instability in Afghanistan. The Government of Afghanistan will devote itself fully and completely to the quest for security and peace. In turn, we hope that this venerated council will continue to generate the right debate, a debate that acknowledges the importance of a regional solution as well as sustained international commitment; a debate that assembles, with urgency, appropriate strategies to fight effectively in this war of perceptions; and a debate that considers all of the components important to a successful “political surge.”

Thank you for your attention.
Mr. President,

Thank you for convening today’s important debate on “Women, peace and security.” My delegation commends your leadership of this council for the month of October. I would also like to express my appreciation for the Secretary General’s comprehensive report on the progress of Resolution 1325.

Mr. President,

The government of Afghanistan is dedicated to the implementation of Resolution 1325. However, in post-conflict countries such as Afghanistan, forces of insecurity are the greatest threat to the advancement of the three pillars of this resolution: protection of women in war and peace, promotion of women’s rights, and participation of women in peace processes.

As the Secretary General’s report has indicated, insecurity is the basic concern that must be addressed before true progress towards women’s rights can be made. Instability affects the most vulnerable parts of the population, and women and children continue to account for the majority of casualties in hostilities. In Afghanistan, the atrocities of the Taliban threaten the progress of women. The historical agenda of the Taliban, during its rule in Afghanistan, included a tyrannical denial of all basic rights to women: the right to free movement, to education, to work. Today, this goal of the Taliban appears unchanged: where they advance in Afghanistan, women’s rights retreat. In areas of increased Taliban activity, there are pronounced restrictions on women’s mobility, attacks on girls’ schools, and
a decrease in services for women provided by our government and aid agencies.

Mr. President,

Despite the growing threat of insecurity, Afghanistan, with the support of the international community, has made several improvements in the participation of women in peace and security.

The Government of Afghanistan has ensured that women’s rights are enshrined in the Afghanistan Constitution, as well as all major international agreements such as the Afghanistan Compact and the recent Paris Declaration. In addition, women have participated in the transitional process from the Bonn Conference until the elections of 2004-2005 and onward. Women have been appointed to high positions in national and local governments, including cabinet-level posts. Today, women account for 27% of the National Assembly and almost 26% of civil servants. Habiba Sorabi, the successful female governor of Bamiyan, is one notable example.

Afghanistan has also strengthened its government institutions to promote women’s rights. The Ministry of Women’s Affairs has achieved much through its dedicated advocacy for women. The National Justice Plan of Afghanistan seeks to improve women’s involvement in the justice sector, and the National Action Plan for Women in Afghanistan aims to increase women’s participation in all areas of social, economic and political life. Finally, the Government of Afghanistan, with international organizations and domestic groups, has worked tirelessly to promote women’s rights in Afghanistan by improving access to healthcare, education and basic services. Today, 40% of children in school are girls, and 81% of the population now receives healthcare through the Basic Package of Health
Services. 40,000 more women now live through childbirth every year.

Mr. President,

Despite these advances, Afghanistan needs to continue to do much more to meet the objectives of Resolution 1325.

Most immediately, the security situation continues to directly affect women’s security and their access to health, education and social protection. Continued terrorist activity is affecting the implementation and monitoring of all programs and projects, especially in the provinces. In addition, poverty, the lack of education and unbalanced allocation of resources must also be addressed. More work is needed to ensure the participation of women in all parts of the stabilization process.

To continue to advance women’s participation in peace and security, our country has a few observations to offer:

1. International involvement is crucial. International support for national initiatives provides important gender-sensitivity training for national institutions such as the national army and police force. International training for women in the civil service, and international support for female students in the form of schools and increased educational opportunities are also crucial. Lastly, coordinating roles, such as the role of UNAMA in Afghanistan, are immensely helpful in coordinating activities and sharing knowledge between organizations that are working to forward women’s rights.

However, international partners must recognize that:

a) Improvement should be internally-driven. While international support is important for all of the aforementioned reasons, the international community should be cautioned that
true reform for women’s participation in peace and security should be generated within the context of the particular country. International involvement should be motivated by the needs of the women within the particular country. There should be no external imposition of standards; there should be no external political agendas.

b) International troops should assist national efforts to protect women. For better protection of women’s participation in peace and security, gender sensitivity training should be mandatory for troops from all countries. In addition, their assistance is important in facilitating women’s mobility to access water, healthcare and markets, and in creating the conditions for women’s safe participation in the public and political life of the country. For example, in Afghanistan, international forces continue to protect roads on which women and families frequently travel to access government services.

2. Importance of regional collaboration. The Secretary-General’s advocacy of regional action plans and regional organizations to support national commitment is fully supported by our government. As infringements on women’s rights are often cross-boundary issues, such as the spillage of women refugees from conflict situations, solutions should also be cross-boundary.

3. Importance of a cohesive approach. A successful approach to advance women’s participation in peace and security must address women’s role in all major sectors of society. In Afghanistan, women’s advancement must be addressed by quelling terrorism, eradicating poverty and addressing ignorance through education.

4. Involvement of women in reconciliation processes. Talks to consolidate peace in post-conflict settings should involve women at every stage. Such talks cannot compromise women’s
rights in any way and must strongly adhere to the principles of true democracy and women’s political participation.

5. The need for action, not words. Steps forward must move women’s rights beyond slogans and good intentions. The gender advisor to the Afghan Ministry of the Interior has found that “organizational inertia” is perhaps the main cause of problems associated with gender inequity in the government ministries. We need the political will and the genuine commitment that will transform words into action. And as the Paris Conference recently reminded us, international donors must fulfill their pledged aid so that efforts to improve women’s standing can be sustained.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, to advance the protection of women in war and peace, the promotion of women’s rights and the participation of women in peace processes, Afghanistan would like to emphasize the importance of addressing the threats of insecurity. Security is the first concern of post-conflict countries that hope to make progress in women’s rights. After security is addressed, the following lessons are important: recognition of the importance of international involvement, the importance of regional collaboration, the inclusion of women in reconciliation processes, and the need to move beyond words towards action.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Mr. President,

Let me begin by congratulating you for assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of December, and thanking you for initiating this important debate today. Thank you also for your open paper on “Global Security and International Terrorism” that identified with clarity the goals of our debate.

Mr. President,

We are gathered here today to address a great common threat: terrorism.

Our focus on this issue has wavered at times, particularly as the worldwide financial crisis drew our attention. But the tragedy that took place two weeks ago in Mumbai is a dark reminder that terrorism is still alive and still threatening the security and peace of all nations.

I stand with my government and my people in firmly condemning the atrocities that occurred in Mumbai almost two weeks ago. Afghanistan extends greatest sympathies to and solidarity with our brothers and sisters in India, because we feel and understand their suffering. A few hours after the first attack in Mumbai, there was a terrorist attack in Kabul, killing and injuring tens of civilians.
And it is even more sobering to understand that Mumbai is only one example. For terrorists, the theatre of destruction is ever widening: Mumbai, Kabul, Islamabad, New York, London, and Madrid.

In Afghanistan, the scars and the burns of terrorism stare us in the face every day.

In Afghanistan spectacular terrorism has become everyday terrorism. Terrorism undermines daily efforts on the part of our government to provide a sense of safety for families, to provide education for our children, to create conditions for free and fair elections for our citizens. Afghans, at all levels, bear the day-to-day burdens of terrorism. Because of our own experience, Afghanistan participates in this debate with great urgency.

And so Mr. President,

Today Afghanistan would like to call the world’s attention to the over-arching ideals terrorism is seeking to destroy: moderation, coexistence and peace.

For terror has an end goal: by murdering humans, it hopes to murder moderation. It hopes to provoke the leaders of the world to be careless with anger. It aspires to create rifts between countries and drive wedges between us. It plans to murder peace and incite us to war.

We cannot play out this script the terrorists have written for us, for that is how they win.

Today we can strike a great blow against terror by affirming our honest collaboration and cooperation. We can only fight terror by standing together, shoulder-to-shoulder. Cooperation is our key. Cooperation is how we win.
Mr. President,

We should commend the recent steps forward we have taken together. The Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan are embarking on the first real steps towards cooperation against the common threat. We hope this new atmosphere will lead to the end of sanctuaries for Al-Qaeda, the Taliban and other terrorist groups and to more mutually beneficial relations between our two countries.

In addition, the recent joint strategy that Afghanistan and Pakistan forged in Turkey is a critical step forward. We should also commend and fully support the cooperative work between India and Pakistan to investigate the persecutors of the Mumbai attacks. The UN, and all of its member states, must recognize the necessity of international support for regional cooperation in the pursuit of peace and security and the fight against terrorism.

Mr. President,

When we speak of cooperation, we must be aware that a cooperative strategy will be strongest if it is consistent and comprehensive.

First, our inconsistent approach towards terrorism in the past has already strengthened terrorist groups around the world. We have to understand: these groups did not drop from the sky. The funding of terrorist groups served short-term, short-sighted policies to promote certain political agendas. However, we have seen these terrorist groups hit back, wreaking more destruction than any benefit we could have gained.

We must learn from the consequences of our past and be aware of our current actions. We must uniformly, consistently work towards the eradication of terrorist groups. There should be zero tolerance for terrorism, zero support for terrorism.
In Afghanistan, our recent initiative to pursue peace talks will also abide by this principle of consistency. We believe that it is necessary to act upon what we know—that there are many elements of terrorist groups who are ready to join the peace process. We must re-engage these elements in peace negotiations and bring them back to work with us constructively. Our peace strategy also aims to deprive terrorist groups of support among Afghan communities by increasing engagement with community members.

Second, a successful cooperation strategy should address terrorism comprehensively—from its root causes upward. Terrorism gains its converts from those who suffer from societal economic imbalances, social handicaps, wrenching poverty, and it hides behind popular political discontent. Terrorism tries to indoctrinate the young and innocent. We need to engage in preventive measures and policies that address the social and economic inequity upon which terrorist elements prey. Our cooperative strategy against terrorism should not be only about decapitating individual terrorist groups; our strategy must also be about bringing security, development and good governance.

In Afghanistan, we are fighting against terrorism on a daily basis by building schools for our children, by ending the narcotics industry that feeds terrorism, by locating rural enterprises for our people to improve their livelihoods and by providing water and sanitation to our people. We are fighting corruption by renewing the leadership of our Ministries and local administrations. We are training our security forces so that our people can live without fear.

This consistent and comprehensive approach will improve our cooperation and fight terrorism effectively.
Mr. President,

We cannot wait for the next terrorist attack to renew our energies towards such a cooperative strategy. We cannot wait for another attack to join together. We have to be as committed to our cooperative measures after a hundred days of peace as we are after an attack as bloody as the ones in Mumbai. Organizations such as this noble Council should further aid cooperation by calling for new sanctions against terrorist groups and those elements and entities who would sponsor and support terrorism.

Without this consistent and comprehensive commitment to cooperation, we will walk into the traps the terrorists have laid out for us. Reckless anger, further fighting and war are how terrorism wins.

At a time when the world is celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights, it is appropriate that we should reassert that all people, regardless of religion, ethnicity, nationality, class or gender, deserve a life free of fear, free of oppression, and free of war. Cooperation and unity is how we forge a world that will be just, peaceful, and strong against terror.

Cooperation is how we win.

Thank you Mr. President.
Mr. Chairman and Members of the Working Group,

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for convening today’s meeting to discuss the report of the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict in Afghanistan. I would also like to thank the Department of Children and Armed Conflict as well as the Working Group as a whole, for its efforts to report cases of violations of children’s rights and to monitor the implementation of Resolution 1612 in countries affected by conflict.

Before sharing some of my delegation’s comments on this report, I would also like to reiterate my government’s wholehearted commitment to implementing Resolution 1612. Thirty years of war in Afghanistan have devastated the lives of our children, especially girls, and deprived a whole generation of basic education. With the illiteracy rate in Afghanistan at 67% for men and 87% for women, the future of the nation really does depend on protecting and educating our children.

Mr. Chairman,

We have achieved substantial progress since 2001. We have established juvenile legislative frameworks and judicial institutions and ratified most of the international human rights treaties including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols. We have committed ourselves to implementing the Millennium Development Goals through our
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National Development Strategy (ANDS). Moreover, dramatic progress has been realized on the ground. For example:

- Almost 7 million children, 35% of them girls, have returned to school;
- More than one hundred thousand children were recently vaccinated against polio in southern Afghanistan;
- The Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) now reaches 81% of the population, up from 9% in 2003. This package includes maternal and new born health, child health and immunization, public nutrition, and communicable disease control;
- Our National Strategy on Children at Risk, which lays out specific activities to prevent violence and exploitation of children, was launched in May 2006;
- We established a special task force to protect children in bordering provinces from traffickers. As a result, since 2002, 317 children have been rescued from traffickers.

Nevertheless, today the Government of Afghanistan’s efforts to protect the rights of its children and provide them with a bright and promising future are seriously threatened by critical security challenges in some parts of the country that jeopardize the gains made in the past seven years and undermine our collective efforts.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation had several meetings with the Department of Children and Armed Conflict prior to the issuance of this report and we had hoped that the Department would take our concerns into consideration. We are deeply disappointed with the report as it stands before you. For the sake of brevity, I will touch on three of our most pressing concerns. First, the report demonstrates a questionable understanding of the political and socioeconomic realities in Afghanistan and the region, breaks
with accepted UN analysis of the situation and thereby misidentifies both the causes and the solutions to the grave abuses of children’s rights which are of substantial concern to us all. Second, the conclusions described in this report seem to be based on sparse, largely anecdotal accounts from unknown, and thereby unverifiable, sources. And finally, the language and tone of the report suggest a shift in focus from the Taliban to the Government of Afghanistan which is wholly unjustified.

Mr. Chairman,

The report misrepresents the historical and socio-economic context of Afghanistan. Terrorism constitutes a major threat and drastically affects the daily lives of our people, particularly children. Terrorists are recruiting, training, and exploiting children as combatants and suicide bombers. They rely more and more on asymmetrical attacks against civilians, and on using civilians as human shields. They attack international workers and create an environment where humanitarian aid cannot reach those who most desperately need it. Vulnerable girl students are a main target of intimidation. A few days after this report was completed, a brutal acid attack on fifteen young girls on their way to school blinded some and permanently scarred others.

This report detracts from the seriousness of the threat. It is the Taliban and other terrorists groups that remain the main violator of human rights, including children’s rights, in Afghanistan. It is our duty to concentrate our common efforts in finding ways and means to protect Afghan children from the atrocities perpetrated by the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and other terrorist groups. For a successful implementation of 1612 in Afghanistan, it is essential to recognize and address the overriding socio-economic and political challenges facing the country and the region. This report fails to identify or substantively address issues of security, governance, and development, and largely
ignores the regional scope of many of the problems described. The conflict is not some sort of civil war between pro-government and anti-government forces. Afghanistan’s government, people, and the international community are in a fight with terrorist groups threatening the entire region and the world from sanctuaries outside of Afghanistan. In this the reports breaks from previous Secretary General’s reports on Afghanistan and on Children in Armed Conflict.

Mr. Chairman,

This report, as the first country-specific report on Afghanistan, should provide a factual, comprehensive point of comparison for future reports. It does not. The credibility of the information contained in this report is dubious for many reasons, of which I will mention a few:

1. This report seems to base many of its broad conclusions on one or two anecdotes, or less. For example, paragraph 61 asserts that the “overall ability” of child protection officers at schools “has been questioned”, but offers nothing to support that claim.

2. This report, in relying on anecdotal evidence, fails to provide any sort of holistic or objective view of trends over the course of the year reported, and no comparison of the severity of various problems. Instead, it showcases a variety of individual examples chosen seemingly at random.

3. The sources used in the report are not identified, and it is unclear how far the accuracy of these sources was verified.

4. This report contains factual inaccuracies that have now been widely repeated in the media. For example, in paragraph 22 the report mentions the demobilization program for child soldiers. However, the programme took place from 2004-2006, not
before 2003 as the report states, and since then the government has set up local committees to monitor and assist with reintegration into society.

Moreover, isolated cases cannot constitute a solid basis for identifying the Government of Afghanistan as a violator of children’s rights. With regards to alleged recruiting of children, alleged detention of children in contravention of the law, and alleged sexual violence committed against children, the Government of Afghanistan has very clear laws which are in line with international law. Incidents in contravention of the law by individuals in the national forces or anywhere else are therefore condemnable but not indicative of systematic violations of children’s rights.

Regarding the practice of *baccha baazi* or “boy play”, we commend the report’s denunciation of this abominable practice, and we welcome the recommendation contained in this report to study ways and means of combating it with the support of civil society and religious leaders. However, my delegation would like to underline that any form of pedophilia or pederasty is certainly not cultural, nor particular to Afghanistan, and it is unhelpful to identify the problem as specifically an Afghan one.

Lastly, Mr. Chairman,

We were disturbed by the apparent shift in focus of the report from the Taliban to the Government of Afghanistan. My government welcomed the visit of Ms Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict. H.E. President Karzai subsequently endorsed the establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism. The expectation of my Government in this regard was to work in a spirit of cooperation with the Department of Children and Armed Conflict, to improve our government’s capacity, legislation, and development strategies, and address
issues of security and poverty. It was with great bewilderment that we found that this report has chosen instead to unconstructively target the Government of Afghanistan. Are we penalizing the Government of Afghanistan for its commitment and good will? It is imperative that this discussion be refocused immediately if we want this working group to deliver productive outcomes that will improve the lives of children in Afghanistan.

Mr. Chairman,

To correct the problems we have identified, we will distribute a list of political and technical recommendations next week. Today I will highlight a few. We recommend that the Secretary General:

1. Request the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting to work in close consultation with the Government of Afghanistan, and in line with the restrictions contained in 1612, when preparing a plan within three months to extend the monitoring and reporting mechanism to all areas of Afghanistan.

2. Request relevant United Nations agencies, including UNDP and UNICEF, within their respective mandates and under the leadership of the Government of Afghanistan, to address broader socio-economic, governance and security issues which will also contribute to the welfare of children affected by armed conflict.

3. Refocus the discussion, in his next report, on the Taliban as the main violator of children rights in Afghanistan, as originally mandated through inclusion of the Taliban in Annex I of the Secretary General’s last report on Children and Armed Conflict.
Finally, we recommend that the members of the Working Group address a message to the Taliban through a public statement of the Chairman of the Working Group, condemning the use and recruitment of children for terrorist activities and calling for the end of attacks on schools and hospitals, and condemning in particular the use of barbaric tactics to repress and intimidate girls.

Mr. Chairman,

The report before us today fails to advance our goals. It distorts the situation in Afghanistan, it relies on information of questionable credibility, and it takes an unwarranted and accusatory tone towards the Government of Afghanistan. We urge the council to refocus our debate on the true enemy and adopt our recommendations in a spirit of cooperation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Mr. President, esteemed colleagues,

Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, for your assumption of the presidency for this first month of the new year. In addition, thank you for convening this debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, an issue which should never be far from our attention. Here at the beginning of a new year, let us renew our conviction that no civilian, anywhere, should bear the costs of war.

As we speak, our thoughts are with the thousands of men, women and children who have been killed, and who have suffered in Gaza in the last 19 days. Civilians have been disproportionately affected by this conflict, and the brutality continues. We call for an immediate ceasefire, as requested in Security Council Resolution 1860. This conflict must end now.

Mr. President,

In Afghanistan as well, a new wave of violence is destroying the lives of innocent civilians. Over 2100 civilians died in 2008 alone. Women, men, students, teachers, aid workers, farmers, tribal leaders, and clergy are all victims. Civilian casualties are an issue that strikes at the heart of Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

In the past few years, the Taliban, al-Qaeda and other terrorist elements have embraced tactics that target civilians with
increasing deadliness. In 2008, terrorists accounted for the majority of civilian casualties. The numbers of victims of the terrorists are sobering: just this year alone, at least 270 civilians were executed, and an additional 725 or more were killed by suicide attacks or by IEDs. This targeting of civilians by the Taliban has accomplished several terrible objectives. First, the terrorists have demonstrated their complete disregard for the sanctity of human life. Suicide bombs kill more civilians than military personnel. The Taliban regularly execute, abduct and torture civilians, particularly targeting Afghans and foreigners who are perceived to be cooperating with, or receiving services from, the government or international community. They behead doctors, teachers, clergy, and tribal leaders, recruit children as suicide bombers, and spray acid in the face of schoolgirls. Taliban harm to civilians and the creation of an environment of distrust and fear impede the Afghan government and the international community’s ability to deliver services to the people who need them most.

Second, the Taliban are using civilians as human shields, hiding in towns and villages and using men, women and children as cover for attacks on government and international forces. As a result, over 60% of civilian casualties have occurred in the South and East of the country, where the Taliban and al-Qaeda are most active.

Mr. President,

Unfortunately, many civilians have also suffered and lost their lives during counter-terrorist operations. This is a matter of grave concern for the Government of Afghanistan. President Karzai has recently and repeatedly raised concerns and has asked the international forces to find ways to prevent civilian deaths. Our Government believes that we need to work together with the international community in a spirit of open dialogue and cooperation to find a workable framework to address this
problem, and we are discussing the issue with our partners. NATO and American-led forces have already introduced new strategies aimed at minimizing civilian casualties, and we have seen some positive results. However, any life is precious, and as a Government we have a particular responsibility to safeguard the lives of our citizens and not rest until every Afghan is safe.

Mr. President,

To decrease the harm to the Afghan people, there are three measures for us to consider. First, avoid tactics which cause significant unintentional civilian deaths. Airstrikes, in particular, result in enormous casualties among innocent people. We must minimize reliance on these methods of warfare. Second, work more in cooperation with the Government of Afghanistan and law enforcement on the ground. Home searches and detaining practices should operate within the guidelines set forth in the Afghan Constitution. Afghan National Army and Police should assume responsibility for home searches. Third, we encourage the international forces to operate with greater cultural sensitivity. In conducting searches and arrests, avoid heavy-handed tactics and operate with respect and minimal force. And where civilian casualties do occur, there should be apologies and accountability.

Mr. President,

With the increasing violence of the Taliban, it has become even more imperative that the Afghan government and the international community work together to effectively eliminate terrorism. The terrorists are responsible for the large majority of civilian casualties, but the Government of Afghanistan and the International Forces bear a heavier burden: we must provide security and protection to the people who need it. Our energies must be channeled collectively to prove to the Afghan people
that we consider their welfare to be central to the endeavor for peace and stability in the country.

Thank you, Mr. President.
Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the Presidency of this Council for the month of March, and thank you for holding this debate. I would also like to thank the Secretary General for his latest report on the situation in Afghanistan. In addition, I am grateful to my friend Mr. Kai Eide for his statement here today, and for his leadership of UNAMA’s work for Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

The Security Council is discussing Afghanistan at a defining moment. In two days, the people of Afghanistan will celebrate our New Year. So we begin today from a new perspective of hope.
The preparation for our Presidential and provincial elections provides the chance to strengthen legitimacy and national unity. The continuing and troubling insecurity in parts of the country threatens those objectives but also gives us a clear goal in the coming months. There has been a welcome increase in international focus on Afghanistan. Afghans are pleased to note the many recent strategic reviews and recommendations, including the upcoming conference in The Hague on 31 March. We hope this new spirit of engagement will help us proceed in a constructive, unified and coordinated way.

Mr. President,

The international community should join Afghanistan in this spirit. In the last eight years, Afghanistan has made progress. We can continue to progress. Afghans are fully invested in a
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legitimate, inclusive democratic process, and we see this in the strong engagement in national debate surrounding the upcoming elections. Afghans want to ensure that their country’s future is a continuation of the peaceful modernisation that began in the early 20th century.

Afghans are eager to work with the international community to eliminate the threat of the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and other terrorist groups. The Taliban is not an organic part of Afghan society. It is a product of violence, cross-border madrassas and foreign indoctrination that disrupted our stable society. Today, a mere 4% of Afghans want to see the Taliban in power. The international community should also be encouraged by the reminder that Afghans supported the US-led intervention in 2001. Afghans welcomed the defeat of the terrorists and extremists who had invaded and corrupted our homeland. As long as the international forces provide safety, security, and the promise of a democratic future, Afghans will continue to be staunch allies.

But Mr. President,

Afghans are simultaneously driven by urgency to keep the dark days securely behind us. The devastation of the Taliban is a constant reminder of the effects of neglecting the destruction of war. The greatest blunder of our time is forgetting that the ruins of war breed angry, desperate and radicalized people.

The world has an obligation to act so that the Taliban and al-Qaeda do not return to power. This obligation is both moral and practical. Morally, the horrific abuse of civilians anywhere, particularly of children and women, is a threat to freedom everywhere. Practically, terrorism knows no border. Attacks by the same groups in New York, London, Mumbai, and Kabul show that the threat in Afghanistan is, indeed, a global threat. Global action is the answer to global threat.
Mr. President,

Afghans have seen the significance of our partnership with the international community. Our biggest accomplishments—our constitution, the elections, the improvements in the Afghan National Army, infrastructure, education, and health—are the projects that have received the strongest international commitment. International dedication bears fruit.

But we have only begun. In the areas where Afghans received less international attention—the Afghan National Police, governance, corruption, judiciary reform—we have not achieved all we should. After the Bonn Conference in 2001, the international community’s “light footprint” approach brought minimal engagement in Afghanistan. We have only recently re-focused so we cannot expect results immediately. It takes time to build a stable, prosperous, democratic society after more than 30 years of war. Progress is a process, completed only over time. Thus we must stay the course. There is still important work to be done.

Mr. President,

This work should focus on the priority of a self-sustaining, functioning state that serves Afghans. For a functioning state is the strongest bulwark against terrorism. Only a democratic, stable Afghanistan stops terror and destruction. Democracy should be strengthened, not weakened. In strengthening the Afghan state, we must have a comprehensive strategy. Today, I would like to highlight a few areas of focus.

First, we should ensure that there are free, fair, and transparent elections in August. This process should encourage a protective, inclusive debate that strengthens the legitimacy of
the institutions we have already created through the Bonn process.

Second, Afghan ownership must continue to be the lynchpin of international efforts. We understand that the ultimate responsibility for our country lies in our own hands. We will do our own work.

Therefore economic development should continue to be implemented through the framework of the Afghan National Development Strategy and the Paris priorities. We must ensure that aid and expertise is available promptly and delivered effectively, efficiently and transparently. Every penny in Afghanistan should be delivered to Afghans.

We should also continue to build the Afghan army and police so that Afghans take a stronger role in the fight on terror. There should be greater Afghan oversight over joint operations with our international partners, and an increased focus on preventing civilian casualties. We want to stress, too, that reconciliation can take place only under the leadership of the Afghan government. The Government of Afghanistan recognizes the importance of a political solution. We negotiate with those elements of the Taliban who are willing to be reconciled. But any talks must be held with full respect for the Constitution of Afghanistan, and must be conducted from a position of strength.

Third, Afghans appreciate the new regional focus on our challenges that protects the sovereignty of our state. We welcome the new trilateral US/Afghanistan/Pakistan process that started recently in Washington DC, and we look forward to a future of increased cooperation. Our neighbors will be the first to benefit from a stable Afghanistan: decreased refugees, decreased narcotics, increased trade.
Mr. President,

Today, Afghans hope this august council will continue its efforts, newly developed and re-focused, to help us regain our footing after decades of war. Afghans still look with great hope to the international community and fully approves the extension of UNAMA’s mandate in support of the Government of Afghanistan.

Despite the continued challenges of terrorism and violence, despite the critics, despite the resignation, despite the doubts—we know our better history. Afghanistan began its journey towards modernisation in the 1900s. Our first constitution in 1924 made a modern education available for all. By the 1960s, we guaranteed equal rights for men and women. Afghans then survived and persevered through three decades of foreign intervention, a bloody civil war and the brutal rule of the Taliban. If we can do all of this, we can succeed in Afghanistan today. For Afghanistan has been, can be, and will be again, a peaceful, democratic crossroads in our region and a contributing member of the world community.

We start the New Year in this spirit of hope.

Thank you Mr. President.
HE Ambassador Zahir Tanin, PR of Afghanistan to the UN is in Havana to lead the Afghan delegation to the NAM Ministerial meeting. On his behalf and on behalf of the delegation of Afghanistan I have the honor to participate and deliver this statement on the subject under consideration by SC which is highly important for my country.

Madam President,

Please accept our congratulations, Madam President, for your assumption of the Presidency of the Security Council for this month. We thank you for convening today’s important debate to discuss the report of the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict and for your chairing of the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict. Your Excellency’s presence here today reflects the level of the commitment and effectiveness of your delegation on this issue.

We would also like to thank Mrs. Radikha Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary General, for her insightful briefing this morning, commend the Department of Children and Armed Conflict for its continuing efforts to protect children affected by armed conflict and welcome the recent establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism.

My delegation welcomes this report of the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict. In November 2008, the Secretary General’s country-specific report on Children and Armed
Conflict in Afghanistan provided us with an initial opportunity to carry out fruitful discussion with our partners in the Security Council’s Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict on ways and means to better implement Resolution 1612 in the challenging environment of Afghanistan. We are looking forward to the opportunity to discuss the Working Group’s conclusions on Afghanistan when they are finalized next month.

Madam President,

For this debate to continue effectively, we must recognize two facts: that one, the chief threat to children in Afghanistan is terrorism, and that two, to overcome this threat, the international community and the Government of Afghanistan must work together.

First, terrorism drastically affects the daily lives of our people, particularly children. The deterioration of the security situation in Afghanistan is the product of the surge of terrorist activities carried out by Al Qaida, Taliban and other associated armed groups. It is the Taliban and other terrorists groups that are and remain the main violator of human rights, including children’s rights, in Afghanistan, and these violations will continue as long as the security situation does not improve.

Terrorists have increased attacks in our territory, using barbaric methods imported from outside Afghanistan including the use of car bombs, suicide attacks and improvised explosive devices. These attacks deliberately target densely populated areas where children are the prime victims. Terrorists are recruiting, training, and exploiting children as combatants and sending them to operate as suicide bombers. The intensification of the Taliban intimidation campaign, accomplished through burnings of schools and clinics, attacking of female teachers and school-children, has created an atmosphere of terror which prevents our children from accessing basic government services. The recent
acid attack on a group of schoolgirls was a horrific demonstration of the particular vulnerability of girls.

Madam President,

Our debate must concentrate our common efforts in defeating terrorism, and in finding ways and means to protect Afghan children and end the atrocities perpetrated by the Taliban and other extremist and terrorist groups. The Government of Afghanistan welcomes the suggestions of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, including proposals to exert pressure on the Taliban and other armed groups to stop recruiting children. However, these measures will be counterproductive if they offer recognition or legitimisation to terrorist groups.

Madam President,

The reported cases of alleged recruitment, detention and sexual violence by individuals in the Afghan government or National Army and Police are disturbing, but isolated cases. For its part, the Government of Afghanistan is deeply committed to fully implementing Resolution 1612 and protecting the rights of children through all possible means and mechanisms.

Afghanistan has developed domestic laws relating to children, established juvenile judicial institutions and ratified most of the international human rights treaties including, in 2002, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols. Our penal code prohibits sexual violence against children, and prohibits the recruitment of persons below 18 in our national police and 22 in our national army.

According to our juvenile code the legal age of criminal responsibility for a child is 12 to 18 years of age and they can be prosecuted and sentenced only by a juvenile court and can be confined only in a juvenile detention center. The Afghan
national legislation, particularly a recent law on combating terrorist offenses, strictly prohibits the detention of children in adult prisons even if the child is accused of terrorism or threats to national security.

We recognize the importance of governance and rule of law to improve and better implement all these legal provisions. We are making necessary efforts on this direction and all of these efforts need sustained international involvement.

In conclusion, Madam President, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to the international community for the military and civilian personnel in Afghanistan that are assisting us in ensuring security and enabling the implementation of rule of law, good governance and human rights, including children rights. We are grateful for their sacrifices in our common endeavor to preserve peace and security, their efforts to build the capacity of the Afghan people, and their recent efforts to address, with us, the issue of civilian casualties. We must continue to move together to stop terrorism’s menace to civilians and children.

Madam President,

Afghanistan has made substantial progress in ensuring the rights of children through legal frameworks and other mechanisms. However, terrorism continues to threaten our goals. It is our hope that, with the continuing help and focus of the international community and the ongoing determination of the Afghan government, we can improve the implementation of Resolution 1612 and protect our children, as the hope for our future, to the best of our ability.

I thank you.
Delivered by: Mr. Mohammad Erfani Ayoob, Minister Counselor, Charge d’affairs, a.i.
At the Security Council debate under agenda item

Mr. President,

I would like to begin by congratulating you for your assumption to the Presidency of this Council, and thanking you for holding this meeting today, which is highly important for my delegation. I would also like to thank Under Secretary-General Mr. John Holmes for his typically concise and insightful presentation. And finally, I would thank His Excellency the Secretary-General for a thoughtful and comprehensive report and its annex on constraints on humanitarian access. The United Nations has brought serious attention to the plight of suffering civilians caught in the crossfire and established a comprehensive framework in the Security Council to deal with protection of civilians during the armed conflict. However, with the recent trend towards asymmetric conflicts, and the tendency of non-state actors to use civilians as human shields or worse, this work is even more essential.

Mr. President,

The Government of Afghanistan with the assistance of our friends in the International Community, making a good progress to provide Afghans the opportunity for a better life, while the enemies of Afghanistan are continuing to bring suffering to the civilians of this war-stricken nation. As numerous UN reports...
have detailed, the Taliban and their local and international allies show an increasingly blatant disregard for human life in Afghanistan. They rely increasingly on the use of improvised explosive devices detonated in high-density civilian areas, which cause indiscriminate damage and loss of life, and affect predominantly women and children. The Taliban have stepped up their use of assassinations, school attacks, kidnappings, and threats targeted against those accused of “cooperating” with the government or the international community. They continue to use civilians as human shields, milking accidental tragedy for their propaganda.

Mr. President,

The Taliban have two simple aims; first, they want to terrify our citizens and convince them they are helpless and cannot trust the international community or their government to protect them; second, they seek to divide the Afghans and the international community, weakening us both. We cannot and shall not let them succeed in either of these goals.

Mr. President,

Unfortunately, in the course of our fight against terrorism, some time civilians have become victims, however unintentionally, of our actions as well. Every civilian death hurts our cause. Each death undermines the faith of the people in their government, and weakens our most valuable asset in the rebuilding of Afghanistan: the Afghans themselves. The Afghan people rightly expect that efforts to fight terrorism would be part of a larger counterterrorism effort rather than vice versa. Their security should be central. The best hope for the Afghan people is the continuing support of the international community, and Afghans are more aware of this than anyone. We all understand the necessity of defeating the brutally violent and dark minded elements that wage war on peace, stability and prosperity in our
region and in the world. Our allies have sent their sons and daughters to fight on foreign land, and Afghanistan is profoundly grateful for this. Without the assistance of international community and their military presence, our people would not have escaped the repression and brutality of the Taliban era and would not, now, have a better future in sight.

Mr. President,

The safety of each person and the prevention of death of innocent civilians are critically important for us, and the Government of Afghanistan has raised this issue so repeatedly with our friends and allies. Afghans should be made to feel that their security, safety and integrity are the centerpiece of our fight. We welcome the recent reviews on this issue, and applaud decisions by the US and NATO to improve rules of engagement in populated areas, minimize the use of air bombardment, and make human security a priority in our strategy. In addition to this Mr. President, it is fundamentally important that the international community should focus and do more on the professional training and better equipping of our growing Afghan National Army and Police forces, so that the Government of Afghanistan should take more and eventually all responsibility for the protection of its citizens. The main goal of Afghan Government and our allies to fight terrorism is to bring a better future for Afghan people. Therefore, while fighting their enemies, we must take every measure to protect them and make sure that they do not become victims of that conflict, and have the opportunity to build their lives in safety and dignity.

Thank you, Mr. President.
Mr. President,

Let me first congratulate Turkey for assuming the Presidency of the Council this month and thank you for convening this debate on Afghanistan. These debates offer an important opportunity to take stock of the situation and ensure that we move forward in a unified fashion. Let me also thank my friend Kai Eide for his typically insightful briefing. We welcome the Secretary-General’s report on Afghanistan, and are grateful for the incisive, detailed assessment of where we are now, and where we are going.

Mr. President,

We are nearing a new beginning in Afghanistan. Five years ago we held our first elections after decades of bloody power struggle. Despite the continuing terrorist activities by the Taliban and al-Qaeda, Afghanistan has made enormous progress since 2001 and our people are ready to go to the polls for a second time. This, in itself, is a huge success, and it reflects the enduring Afghan support for the stabilization process and the value of the partnership between Afghanistan and the international community.

Mr. President,

The elections have been planned for less than three months from now. Between now and August, we must act to ensure the transparency and fairness of the electoral process. There is a lot at stake. Afghans know that the elections are the only feasible
way to build on the positive progress of the past years, but in order to do so they must be credible and legitimate. The results of the elections should serve to unite the Afghan people, strengthen Afghan institutions, and provide momentum for ongoing stabilization efforts.

Mr. President,

In terms of the campaign, the rules of the game have been defined by law, and the government of Afghanistan and other relevant bodies are working to ensure that the candidates receive security, transportation, and access to the media. For the elections themselves, the essential priority is to ensure security so that people from all over the country will be able to vote. In this regard, the Afghan National Army and Police will provide the main security for more than 7000 polling stations nationwide, supported by a strengthened international force. In addition, independent bodies like the IEC, Electoral Complaints Commission and Media Commission will be responsible for providing information, logistics and oversight, guaranteeing access to media for candidates and responding to concerns and questions from the public. UNAMA and the SRSG continue to play an essential role here as the international focal point, along with the government of Afghanistan, in ensuring fair play and a transparent, legitimate and credible elections process.

Mr. President,

These upcoming elections have deservedly been the center of attention both among Afghans and the international community. However, we must remember that they are part of larger ongoing efforts for change and stability that go beyond the election process. The coming months should reinvigorate the partnership between the Government of Afghanistan and the international community. We should use the elections to add additional momentum to the strategic shifts that began this year.
and unify our approach around first, the need to strengthen Afghan institutions and make them sustainable; and second, the need to be increasingly responsive to the growing expectations of the Afghan people, who want to see a tangible improvement in their lives.

Mr. President,

The past months, with some welcome strategic reviews by the US and NATO, have provided us with a timely opportunity to review our achievements and rethink our strategies in different multilateral arenas. Combined with increasing involvement from Afghan ministries, this has resulted in a shift towards a more unified strategic approach, focusing on an intensified civilian effort, an improvement in sub-national governance and service delivery, and increased alignment of international priorities with Afghan national strategies. We must continue to build on the substantial progress made thus far.

Mr. President,

In the past eight years, Afghanistan has grown from a country devoid of society, government or infrastructure to one with thousands of miles of roads, millions of children in school, and access to basic healthcare for 85% of the population. In addition, the Government of Afghanistan has made positive developments in anti-corruption and rule of law. The international community has helped us to build, train and equip an Army and Police force that can begin to protect our citizens. Kabul and a few other cities now have uninterrupted electricity. And in a promising and historic development, Afghanistan will be agriculturally self-sufficient this year for the first time.

But, Mr. President,

Daunting challenges remain to be adequately addressed in the areas of security, development and regional cooperation.
First, insecurity is an increasing, rather than decreasing, problem, and civilians continue to disproportionately bear the costs. The Taliban have shown an increasing disregard for human life, intentionally targeting civilians, particularly women, children and humanitarian staff, and using populated areas to stage attacks on international forces in order to force civilian casualties. As the international military force increases in strength over the summer, and as insecurity worsens in parts of the country in advance of the elections, we must be particularly careful to avoid an increase in the loss of civilian life. We applaud the recent steps taken by NATO and the United States to address these concerns, and the recently announced improved guidelines for rules of engagement and use of air bombardment. It is our hope that these steps will serve to strengthen the partnership between the international community and the Afghan people, and reassure Afghans that the government and the international community see their protection as a priority.

Second, Mr. President,

Despite more focused and unified goals, our development efforts remain fragmented, inefficient and incomplete. Poverty in Afghanistan has increased and unemployment is one of the biggest challenges. Governance, corruption and rule of law remain weak and need sustained attention from both the government and the international community. Humanitarian and development aid should be better coordinated and more accountable. Resources need to be funneled towards capacity building for the Afghan government because, as the Secretary-General’s report so eloquently states, we need a “lasting expansion of government present and not a temporary expansion of foreign presence.”

To address this issue, the civilian surge will be the backbone of the successful implementation of the ANDS because it will further support national development priorities and programmes
in key sectors. In addition, improvements in sub-national governance and service delivery can help disrupt the negative impacts of insecurity and provide Afghans with the incentives to engage with the stabilization process. In both of these efforts, donors’ political, technical and financial assistance must be aligned behind national priorities.

In this regard, my government continues to fully support the essential coordination role of UNAMA. We welcome UNAMA’s strengthened mandate, and applaud the courageous work of the men and women who have accomplished so much. We also welcome the recently signed UNDAF, as it provides priorities that are in line with the ANDS and other national development priorities.

And finally, Mr. President,

While the international community and the UN have essential roles to play in the coming months and years, Afghanistan also needs to have stronger cooperation with its neighbors. As has been widely recognized, this conflict is not limited to the borders of Afghanistan but involves the entire region, and endangers people all over the world. Our enemies are not local, but regional, and find sanctuary and support outside of Afghanistan. A full regional approach will be needed to combat them.

We have recently begun to move towards a more positive regional interaction with Pakistan, particularly through trilateral arrangements with the US, as well as with Turkey and Iran. There have been promising bilateral and multilateral advances towards better regional understanding as well. It is our hope that all regional stakeholders can recognize the mutual advantages to a stable, prosperous Afghanistan, and can be involved to help confront our shared challenges in a sustainable, cooperative way.
In conclusion, Mr. President,

We share the Secretary-General’s assessment that we have an opportunity to make significant progress if we maintain our new momentum and focus in the coming months. This effort will require broad and consistent international engagement going forward. If we can ensure transparent and open elections, increase security for the Afghan population, improve coordination and effectiveness of aid, strengthen Afghan institutions and constructively address the regional dimensions of the situation, we can clear a space on which to build a strong, sustainable Afghanistan.

Thank you.
Mr. President,

First, allow me to congratulate you for assuming the Presidency of the Council for the month of August, and thank you for convening the debate on this crucial topic. I would also like to welcome the report of the Secretary-General on sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, which reflects both the appalling scope and devastating effects of this issue.

Mr. President,

Afghanistan remains fully dedicated to the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 and 1820 on the rights of women in conflict situations. It has become clear that the lack of a stable, secure state leads often to persistent violations of human rights, particularly women’s rights. Insecurity allows extremism to flourish, and makes it extremely difficult for governments and international organizations to provide even basic services to their citizens. Lack of resources and capacity limits the ability of governments to effectively enforce protective legislative and judicial mechanisms. Without the equal involvement of half of our populations in our civil societies, economies, and political systems, our nations are deeply incapacitated, and our children, economies, and even the stability of our countries suffer.

Mr. President,

Only eight years ago, under the brutal Taliban regime, Afghanistan had no provisions for the protection of women and human rights; but despite ongoing difficulties, we have made significant progress, particularly in education and healthcare.
Women’s issues are taken into account at each stage of the national stabilization process and in national strategies like the ANDS. Afghanistan has the legal and judicial mechanisms in place to achieve success. We are also party to the relevant international mechanisms, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). However, the ongoing support of the international community for Afghan efforts is absolutely necessary, both to encourage our citizens’ bottom-up efforts towards success and to sustain the government’s top-down labours. We have emerged from the darkness of a long national nightmare, but we still have more work to do.

Mr. President,

In the past thirty years, Afghans have experienced violence on an almost unprecedented scale. Persistent poverty and other symptoms of conflict have disproportionately affected women. And for the first time in the 1990s, during a bloody internecine war, physical and psychological violence was accompanied by horrendous acts of sexual abuse. The scars of these abuses continue to be seen and felt today.

Women in Afghanistan still face not just sexual violence, but sexual discrimination and oppression caused and exacerbated by enduring insecurity and the terrorist activities of the Taliban and al-Qaeda. In some particularly unstable parts of the country, where the Taliban are still active or where the rule of law is not yet strong, women attempting to work or hold office face abuse, threats, and physical attacks. Other women have their rights curtailed, and are forced into marriage and other exploitative situations. Even in areas free of the Taliban threat, a creeping Talibanisation promotes an un-Islamic, un-Afghan culture that denies women’s basic rights.
Mr. President,

Afghanistan supports the Secretary-General’s analysis that a central step towards preventing violence against women is to combat gender discrimination, and to give women a larger role in political and decision-making processes. Afghanistan’s experience shows that there is no better advocate for women’s rights than women themselves, and so we must do everything we can to help them be heard.

In the upcoming presidential and provincial elections, the participation of women will be crucial to success. We have had some praiseworthy victories: millions of women have registered to vote, and educational programs run by the Government, UNFPA, and UNAMA educate women about the voting process and their rights and opportunities as citizens. Our Constitution guarantees women at least 25% of seats in provincial councils, and 27% of seats in Parliament, and women have served as governors and in the Cabinet. A growing number of women have registered as candidates: a record-breaking 328 women are running for provincial councils, and 2 women are among the presidential candidates.

Nonetheless, Mr. President,

Some women parliamentarians have suggested that security concerns may prevent them from presenting themselves in the upcoming 2010 parliamentary elections. Even if the governmental mechanisms are in place to ensure equality, women are silenced within a culture of shame, and even more do not demand their rights due to a lack of awareness or support. My Government will continue to enlist cultural, political, and religious leaders to encourage a proper understanding of women’s Islamic and political rights, and to explicitly and publicly condemn all violence against women and girls; impunity only reinforces patterns of violence.
Mr. President,

Afghan women need the support and protection of the UN, the international community and the government of Afghanistan as they work to transform society. The role of the UN and international community in this struggle should be to support the Government of Afghanistan with resources, knowledge, policy guidance, and capacity-building. Led by this Council, we should also encourage a moral and legal awareness of women’s rights both locally and in multilateral forums, and keep violence against women at the top of the international agenda. With this support, we can work to strengthen judicial mechanisms and decrease reliance on local, ad hoc justice systems that frequently disadvantage women. We can increase the number of women in the Afghan National Police and have more units dedicated to domestic violence. We can also do more to combat extremism and educate the public about the rights of women by publicizing and enforcing international and Islamic human rights norms.

Mr. President,

The women of Afghanistan continue to suffer from violence. However, social transformation, like political stabilization and economic development, is a gradual process that requires security and continuity. We have learned that the surest way to improve the situation of women is to provide them education, protection, and support, and to give them a platform from which to speak for themselves. My Government remains fully committed to this cause.

Thank you, Mr. President.
Statements delivered to the United Nations General Assembly and Committees
Ambassador Tanin addresses the General Assembly
Mr. Chairman,

Allow me at the outset to congratulate you and members of the Bureau for your election. We are fully confident that under your able leadership the third committee will accomplish its task successfully.

Let me also extend my appreciation to Mr. Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for his comprehensive and detailed report. Under the energetic leadership of Mr. Costa, UNODC is committed to assist Member States in their struggle against illicit drugs, crime and terrorism.

UNODC is supporting the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan particularly the Ministry of Counter Narcotics in elaboration of strategic guidelines and mobilisation of resources to address problems of production and trafficking of drugs.

Mr. Chairman,

Afghanistan is strongly committed to fighting narcotics alongside terrorism through a combination of law enforcement and economic measures. We share the concern of the International Community on this issue and expect that it will continue to support us in this fight by assisting us to implement an effective and comprehensive counter narcotics strategy.

Cognizant of the devastating effects of narcotics on our society, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan adopted its National Drug
Control Strategy in January 2006 at the international London Conference on Afghanistan. The National Drug Control Strategy outlines the following eight pillars for combating and ultimately ending the illicit narcotic track in Afghanistan;

- Alternative livelihoods
- Building institutions
- Information campaign
- Drug law enforcement
- Criminal justice
- Eradication
- Drug Demand Reduction and treatment of addicts
- Regional cooperation

Mr. Chairman,

The Afghanistan’s opium survey released in August 2007 reported an increase in opium poppy cultivation by 17 percent and potential opium production of 34 percent. Continued terrorist activity, extreme poverty, economic reasons, and pressures from traffickers and local criminal groups have been considered as causes of expansion of poppy cultivation.

The inextricable nexus between insecurity and narcotics necessitates a holistic approach to effectively address the issue of narcotics in our society and region. In this regard, it is noteworthy to mention that the 14 provinces which have become free of poppy cultivation are provinces in which security and governance have significantly improved, while poppy cultivation has significantly increased in those provinces that have seen a deterioration of the security situation. Therefore, as part of the comprehensive campaign against the scourge of narcotics, we should also focus on breaking the nexus between narcotics and terrorism simultaneously, as mutually reinforcing factors.
In this context, we would like to emphasize on a crucial point that has also been asserted by the communiqué of the High Level Meeting on Afghanistan held on September 23rd at the United Nations; “it is imperative to underline the link between the production and trafficking of illegal drugs and the financing of terrorists activities, and agreed that breaking this linkage is vital to creating a stable, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan”.

Mr. Chairman,

We are thankful to the international community for its commitment to collectively support increased Afghan government efforts to fight the poppy cultivation in province where it has expanded and to reward provinces and districts where poppy is not grown, to interdict, arrest and prosecute drug traffickers and corrupt officials, to pursue targeted eradication of poppy crops and to deliver effective rural development throughout Afghanistan.

Mr. Chairman,

Afghanistan is a landlocked country, traffickers transport drug consignment from Afghanistan through our neighboring countries and other transit states to the European markets. It is therefore evident a successful and efficient fight against narcotics will require an equal effort by transit and consuming countries, on the basis of the principle of shared responsibility. Strong enforcement measures for the control of borders and mutual cooperation among judicial and law enforcement authorities of these countries would contribute highly to the fight against narcotic drugs. In this regard, we welcome the trilateral agreement signed by Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan in June 2007 committing the countries to carry out more joint border operations and increase information sharing.
Thank you Mr. Chairman.
Mr. President,

It is with great pleasure for me to address this august assembly, as we have gathered to consider the annual draft resolution of the General Assembly entitled “The Situation in Afghanistan.”

Today’s meeting, following the High-Level Meeting of 23 September - co-chaired by H.E. President Karzai and Secretary General Ban Ki-moon - and the Security Council’s Meeting of 15 October on Afghanistan is a clear indication of the ongoing commitment and support of the United Nations and the international community to ensure Afghanistan’s successful transition from war and conflict to peace and stability.

We are pleased that Afghanistan continues to be on the agenda of the General Assembly. Today’s gathering reaffirms that Afghanistan remains among the top priorities of the United Nations. It also indicates unwavering international support for efforts to consolidate the gains of the past six years towards the goal of a stable, moderate and prosperous Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

As we speak, Afghanistan continues to make substantial progress in various areas, including institutional building, economic growth, education, health, road-building and rural development.

In the area of security, we have increased the size and strength of our national army and police, enabling our security forces to
play a more efficient role in combat operations in various parts of Afghanistan. The Afghan national army, which will stand at 47,000 strong by the end of the year, is on track to meet the target strength of 72,000 by 2009. Additional progress is evident in disbanding illegal armed groups throughout the country.

Steady progress continues in improving the socio-economic conditions of our people. Eighty-five percent of the population has access to basic health service. We have built 4000 hospitals and clinics throughout the country. Increased access to health centers has saved the lives of 89,000 children and reduced maternal mortality by 40,000 this year. More than six million students - of which girls comprise 36 percent - are attending schools and universities.

The National Solidarity Program, as the largest effort to empower and develop rural areas, has brought development projects to over 18,000 communities throughout the country, touching the lives of 13 million villagers.

Afghanistan has taken important steps towards regaining its historic role as a facilitator of regional economic cooperation. This comes after years of economic isolation, resulting from years of armed-conflict and foreign occupations. Among other infrastructure projects completed, our national highway system - stretching 6,000 kilometers - will lead to increased trade with our neighbors.

Afghanistan’s inclusion in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in May of this year was a milestone development for our integration to regional markets. And most recently, we hosted the 17th Annual Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organization in the historic city of Herat with the purpose of maximizing
Afghanistan’s potential to promote trade and development in the region.

The consolidation of our democratic institutions has enabled our citizens to enjoy more social, political and economic rights than ever before. The unprecedented number of women represented in our national assembly and presence of tens of political parties and numerous media outlet is clear testimony to this assessment. Hundreds of various publications and television and radio stations throughout the country have made Afghanistan one of the most liberal environments for independent media in the region.

The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) continues to undertake important measures to protect and promote human rights for all citizens. In this regard, I am pleased to state that, among other initiatives, progress continues towards the implementation of the Action Plan for Peace, Reconciliation and Justice.

Mr. President,

Despite remarkable achievements, we have not lost sight of the numerous challenges. Terrorism, illicit drugs, weak state institutions, poverty, socio-economic hardships, as well as the challenges associated with the situation in the region are among our main challenges. These are interdependent threats that have domestic, regional and international dimensions.

Terrorism remains the primary threat facing efforts to consolidate peace and stability in Afghanistan. This year, there has been a rise in violent terrorist activities of Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and the region. Terrorists are spreading fear and intimidation inside and outside Afghanistan. They rely on heinous and brutal acts aimed at undermining the security of our people and deterring the commitment of the international
community to Afghanistan. That is why they have increased terrorist attacks in the form of abductions, intimidations, suicide bombings and use of sophisticated explosive devices, targeting and terrorizing a wide spectrum of society; children attending school, religious clerics, international aid workers, journalists and Afghan and international security forces.

Mr. President,

Substantial progress continues in defeating terrorism and extremism. Recent military operations have weakened the command and control structure of terrorist networks by capturing or eliminating an increasing number of high and middle-level Taliban commanders who were responsible for organizing and carrying out numerous suicide bombings in various provinces. Our counter-terrorism efforts also include strengthening the international sanctions regime against terrorists.

Mr. President,

Sustained success in the military campaign against terrorists is dependent on the level of technical and logistical assistance to bolster the capacity of our security institutions. A strong and professional national army and police is a pre-condition for long-term stability and security in Afghanistan. We call for increased efforts to accelerate the training of our security forces so that they become self-reliant and able to assume an independent role in addressing the security needs of our people.

Military means, by itself, is not the sole solution to Afghanistan’s security problems. An integrated military, political and development strategy is necessary for substantial and sustainable improvement of security in Afghanistan. As a complement to military action, we continue to increase efforts for political outreach to “non-terrorist” Taliban; those who are
willing renounce violence and abide by the provisions of Afghanistan’s constitution.

Implementing development and infrastructure projects, particularly in areas threatened by Taliban and extremists, will have a direct impact on improving security. Therefore, every effort should be made to “maintain and win” the support of people by creating employment opportunities and ensuring the provision of basic services throughout the country. Without adequate development, employment opportunities and improved socio-economic conditions throughout the country, we will run the risk of ordinary citizens falling hostage to extremist groups.

Mr. President,

Regional cooperation is indispensable for defeating terrorism and extremism, affecting stability in Afghanistan and the region. Close cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan continues at a bilateral and multi-lateral basis to eliminate this scourge jointly and resolutely. Just last week, we convened the first meeting of the Jirga Commission as a follow-up to the Peace Jirga, held in Kabul in the month of August. The second meeting of Peace Jirga will be held in Pakistan early next year. It is of utmost importance that the collaborative atmosphere in relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan continue. We are following the recent developments in Pakistan with concern, as security, stability and normalcy in Pakistan are critical for security and stability in the region.

For us, regional cooperation is not only the most effective strategy to address the challenges of terrorism and illicit drugs, but also underdevelopment, organized crime and natural disasters. It will also help in translating the region’s rich resources and potential into development and prosperity. There are many opportunities for regional cooperation in areas of trade, energy, transportation, transit, cultural and education,
water management and joint investment projects. The opportunity must be seized.

Mr. President,

Narcotics pose a threat to the stability and well-being of our societies. In our part, we have accelerated efforts to rid this menace from Afghanistan. Apart from those areas where the Taliban-Al-Qaeda poses a threat to security, approximately twenty-six thousand hectares of land have been cleared of poppy-cultivation, amounting to 13 poppy-free provinces. This is in addition to a substantial decrease of cultivation in 12 other provinces. With enhanced law enforcement, we have apprehended 85 traffickers at Kabul International Airport and 1016 cases of trafficking were submitted to the Office of the Attorney General this year. Other measures include facilitating the arrest of numerous international traffickers in foreign countries, with the support of Interpol.

Nevertheless, to achieve long-term and sustainable success in combating narcotics, we must take into account the networked character of illicit drugs, entailing farmers, producers, traffickers and consumers. In combating narcotics our strategy must address all the components. Active participation of transit and consuming countries, on the basis of shared responsibility, is critical for enabling us to contain the menace of illicit drugs. Providing Afghan farmers with alternative livelihoods should entail a key aspect of such a strategy. In this regard, we count on the sustained support of the international community to implement our national drug control strategy.

Mr. President,

Afghanistan has taken numerous steps to enhance good-governance and the rule of law. We have launched reform strategies in various institutions, including the Supreme Court,
Attorney General’s Office and Ministries of Interior and Justice, to enhance efficacy and professionalism in our civil service. To this end, our Civil Service Commission has finalized a revised public administration reform framework and implementation program to ensure a merit based appointment mechanism for civil servants. As part of the effort to ensure accountability in our institutions, we have arrested or detained numerous senior and mid-level officials engaged in illegal activities. These measures were complemented with the approval of the UN Convention against Corruption by the National Assembly in the month of August and ongoing preparations to present our National Justice Sector Strategy. In this context, we express our appreciation to the Government of Italy for co-hosting with Afghanistan and the United Nations the International Rome Conference on the Rule of Law and Justice in July.

However, our success in promoting good governance and the rule of law is interlinked with consolidation of a powerful and independent judiciary, effective state institutions, free media, functioning civil society, and a conducive environment for economic, social and cultural development of all citizens.

Mr. President,

More than twenty-years of conflict resulted in dire socio-economic conditions that forced millions of our citizens to migrate abroad. We are grateful to all countries, particularly Pakistan and Iran, for having hosted millions of our compatriots during some of the most difficult times of our nation’s history. While expressing our earnest desire to have all our citizens’ back home, we call for sustained international assistance to create a feasible environment for their voluntary, gradual, safe and dignified return and reintegration.
Mr. President,

The Afghanistan Compact remains the most viable framework to address our remaining challenges. Within the framework of the JCMB, we periodically evaluate our progress towards achieving vision of the Afghanistan Compact with our international partners. While expressing appreciation for the support of the international community to the Afghan process, we would like to stress need to ensure greater efficiency in the mobilisation, coordination and utilisation of assistance to implement our national development strategy.

Mr. President,

Afghanistan continues to struggle with legacies of three decades of conflicts and emergence of the new challenges. As such, it will not be able to deal with its magnitude of problems on its own. It will need the long, sustained and adequate support of the international community for many years to come. The presence and commitment of the international community is an existential issue for Afghanistan. The international community should acknowledge the importance of its continuing commitment for peace and security in Afghanistan, the region and the global world. Neither complacency nor exaggerated pessimism will help our efforts to achieve a peaceful and stable Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

The role of the United Nations in Afghanistan is of crucial importance for achieving lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan. We commend the role of UNAMA, under the able leadership of Mr. Tom Koenigs, in promoting enhanced international engagement and coordination between the international community and Afghanistan to achieve vision of the Afghanistan Compact.
We are also grateful for the personal dedication and commitment of the Secretary General to Afghanistan. His visit to Kabul in the month of July, his participation in International Rome Conference on the Rule of Law and Justice in July, and initiative to convene the High-Level Meeting along the sidelines of the 62nd Session of the UNGA are very much welcomed by the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

We are also thankful to all countries that have committed troops to serve alongside forces of our national army and police to provide security to our people. We pay particular tribute to the families of those who made the ultimate sacrifice for the cause of peace in Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, I should like to express my delegation’s appreciation to our colleagues at the German Mission for their tireless efforts in leading the consultations on the draft resolution before us today. Special thanks go out to Dr. Metcalf of the German Mission in that regard. We also extend our gratitude to all member-states that co-sponsored this year’s resolution.

Thank you Mr. President.
Mr. President,

I would like to express the appreciation of my delegation for organizing this important debate on the progress towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs have been a powerful mobilizing force for greater focus on global and national actions to improve the well-being of people around the world. This meeting provides the opportunity to review and discuss the implementation of the MDGs and pave the ground for a successful convening of the High Level Meeting on MDGs in September 2008. In my remarks today, I would like to share Afghanistan’s experience towards fulfilling the MDGs.

Mr. President,

In 2000, when the Member States adopted the Millennium Declaration and committed themselves to endorse the MDGs in a time-bound manner, Afghanistan was embroiled in armed conflict. In March 2004, my Government committed itself to achieve the MDGs within a time bound period. As a late entrant to global development efforts, the Afghan Government has extended its MDGs timeline from 2015 to 2020 due to quarter of a century of conflict and our inability to join this global effort in 2000. Lack of available data has posed unique problems in preventing reliable baselines from which to set targets. Therefore most of the global targets have been “Afghanised”, which means that they have been revised to make them more
relevant to Afghanistan. Moreover, in recognition of the interdependency of development and security a ninth goal of ‘enhancing security’ has been added to the MDGs.

The development policy framework of Afghanistan, which was established at the London Conference in January 2006, is aimed at enabling the achievement of the MDGs. At the London Conference, we launched our National MDGs Report, presented our interim National Development Strategy (i-ANDS) and adopted the Afghanistan Compact.

Mr. President,

Notwithstanding progress towards the MDGs, many challenges still remain in the implementation of our goals. Allow me to highlight some of them: **Poverty and Hunger (MDG1)**. Since 2001, economic growth has not only been significant but also generated better livelihoods; GDP per capita has increased 53% in the last five years. However, Afghanistan remains one of the poorest countries in the world, with an estimated 22 million Afghans - representing 70% of the population - living in poverty especially high in rural areas. Poverty and unemployment, both of which have contributed to the increase of the terrorist activities in the country, can jeopardize the gains made in the last 6 years. We have prioritized addressing both in a sustainable and timely manner.

**Education (MDG2).** Since 2001, nearly 7 million children have returned to schools - one third of whom are girls. More than 3,500 schools have been built and new curriculum 2 and textbooks have been developed for primary education. In addition, the number of teachers has increased seven-fold. However, a great number of children, particularly those living in rural areas, continue to face difficulties in accessing educational institutions. It is also important to mention that the Taliban and Al-Qaida, during their campaign of terror, have attacked and
intimidated teachers, students and burned out a large number of schools.

*Gender (MDG3).* Significant progress has been achieved to empower women in the political, economic and social areas. Women play an important role in the development and peace process in Afghanistan. However, many women still face obstacles. Among them are low rates of literacy and life expectancy, coupled with pregnancy related complications, unemployment and insufficient access to education and health services.

*Reduce Child Mortality, Improve Maternal Health and Combat Diseases (MDGs 4, 5, 6).* Today 85% of the Afghan population has access to basic health services and access to diagnostic and curative services has increased from almost none in 2002 to more than 40% in 2008. The rate of infant and maternal mortality has been reduced by 85,000 and 40,000 annually. We have created our National AIDS Control Program (NACP) in 2004 to collect systematic data on the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. However, close to 900 children under the age of five die daily and more than 60 women die every day from pregnancy-related complications. Malaria is prevalent in more than 60% of the country and Afghanistan is the 12th highest tuberculosis burdened country in the world and the highest in South Asia.

*Environment (MDG7).* In 2007, 343 community water points were constructed in the drought hit and conflict-affected parts of southern Afghanistan. The Government of Afghanistan has taken numerous initiatives to prevent environmental degradation. However, only 23% of the entire population has access to safe drinking water and most of the diseases are caused by lack of drinkable water.

*Security (MDG9).* The lack of security caused by the Taliban and Al-Qaida in the southern parts of Afghanistan is a major
obstacle to economic and social development. Achieving our MDGs solely depends on providing security to our people. Afghanistan has added this new goal that includes targets related to disarmament, de-mining and counter narcotics. We would like to place emphasis on the need for technical and financial assistance to our security institutions to contribute to the rule of law, and advance the demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration process (DDR) and the counter narcotics efforts.

Mr. President,

Develop a *Global Partnership for Development (MDG8)*. The main part of Afghanistan’s national development resources are currently provided by the international community. Therefore, the partnership with the donor community is key to ensuring the implementation of our National Development Strategy, including the MDGs. In this regard, it is important to mention that the delivery and effectiveness of aid to Afghanistan is faced with the following constraints:

1. The overall volume of aid delivered to Afghanistan is less in comparison to other post conflict settings.

2. There is a growing gap of billions of dollars between amounts pledged and amounts disbursed which undermines the ability of our government to undertake long-term fiscal planning.

3. Nearly three quarters of the aid is disbursed outside our national budget which creates a parallel system that undermines our government’s ownership, involves multiple levels of contractors that inflate cost and fail to build Afghan national capacity.
4. The proportion of “tied” aid is three times more than “untied” aid which affects our capability to plan and effectively implement our national development strategy.

By adopting the Afghanistan Compact, the international community committed itself to improve aid effectiveness in Afghanistan, to provide resources and support for the implementation of our development strategy including the MDGs. We would like to seize this opportunity to remind the donor community to fulfill its commitment under the Afghanistan Compact and to:

1. Increase the level of Official Development Assistance (ODA), particularly to countries emerging from conflict.

2. Translate pledges into commitments and therefore provide more predictable and multi-year funding commitments.

3. Provide its financial support through our national budget in order to reduce the duplication, transactions costs, strengthen the national ownership.

4. Deliver “untied” aid whenever possible and provide assistance within the framework of the Afghan National Development Strategy.

Afghanistan is currently at the crucial stage of finalizing its National Development Strategy (ANDS) and entering into its implementation phase. The Afghanistan National Development Strategy will be launched during the International Conference on Afghanistan to be held in Paris in June 2008. The Paris Conference represents an opportunity for our international partners to renew their political and financial commitment for the implementation of ANDS and the achievement of our MDGs. At the Paris Conference, we expect that the international community will continue its political and financial
support to Afghanistan so as to enable us to improve the lives of our people and stand on our own feet.

Thank you for your attention.
Mrs. Deputy Secretary General,

Distinguished co-chairs,

I would like to thank you for organizing this important second round of consultations on the Gender aspects of Coherence and I would also like to express my gratitude to the Deputy Secretary General for having submitted the comprehensive “Note on the United Nations System Support to Member States on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment”.

Distinguished co-chairs,

An important precondition for the success of Afghanistan’s development goals is the reversal of women’s historical disadvantage in Afghan society. The Government’s vision is a peaceful and progressive nation where women and men enjoy security, equal rights, and opportunities in all spheres of life. The Government is committed to fulfilling its obligation to women’s development as embodied in the Constitution, the MDGs, the Afghanistan Compact, and international treaties.

The Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) that has been recently launched during the International Conference in support of Afghanistan which was held in Paris on June 12, provides a framework for mainstreaming gender interventions across sectors so as to address women’s position in the society, their socio-economic condition, and access to development opportunities. The Afghan Ministry of Women’s Affairs, as the
lead agency for women’s advancement, takes on the role of coordinating and monitoring the outcomes of Government interventions.

Distinguished co-chairs,

We share a common commitment to strengthen our collective efforts to achieve gender equality and promote and ensure the rights of girls and women. The implementation of this strategy is a shared responsibility among Afghan government entities at the national and sub-national levels. Its effective implementation requires the continuing assistance of the international community including the United Nations Agencies operating in Afghanistan.

Distinguished co-chairs,

Afghanistan is not among the pilot countries of System-wide Coherence but represents an interesting case of multiple UN agencies and donor countries, present on the ground to assist the government reaching its development objectives related to gender equality and women’s empowerment.

We are grateful to the donor community and the whole United Nations system, specially UNAMA, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, and UNIFEM for its continuous support of gender equality and women empowerment’s efforts in Afghanistan, however much needs to be improved to ensure that UN’s assistance in the advancement of gender equality and women’s empowerment reaches its full potential.

Currently about 19 UN agencies are operating in Afghanistan carrying out different mandates. While few development agencies have explicit gender related mandates, number of other agencies that are implicitly deal with the mainstreaming of gender dimension into their specific programmes. This makes
the division of labor not always assembled into one coherent mechanism which can produce effective results on a long term basis.

It is undeniable that the UN development agencies carry a unique set of expertise in all fields that have been reflected in their activities in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, it has to be ensured that relevant UN agencies carry a complementary mandate and identify actions to align their work in support of gender equality and women’s empowerment results. This will certainly contribute to tackle the issue of duplications, increase cost-effectiveness and improve the quality and level of assistance provided by the UN.

Moreover effective delivery on gender equality and the empowerment of women in Afghanistan requires a strong coordination under the leadership of the Afghan Government and through an integrated UN effort with clear identification of results that the agencies would achieve individually and collectively. This will strengthen the effectiveness, accountability and responsibility for actual implementation on the ground and will ensure that programs carried out adequately focused on the gender benchmarks of Afghanistan National Development Strategy.

Distinguished co-chairs,

We would like to take this opportunity to request from the UN agencies operating in Afghanistan to intensify their efforts to coordinate a policy and programmatic framework for:

- an integrated gender approach to United Nations policies and programmes in Afghanistan
- effective information sharing and monitoring of all UN programmes addressing gender issues
-and increased cost-effectiveness, through a reduction of overlapping and duplication.

Thank you for your attention.
Mr. Chairman,

Since this is the first time my Delegation is taking the floor, I would like to congratulate you on your election to the chairmanship of this committee and the able leadership you have demonstrated since the beginning of our work. I would also like to assure you of the full dedication of my Delegation throughout your chairmanship and during the work of this committee.

Let me also extend my appreciation to Mr. Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for his insightful presentation and the continuous assistance UNODC is providing Afghanistan in addressing problems of production and trafficking of drugs.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to begin by reiterating that the Government of Afghanistan is strongly committed to preventing the cultivation and smuggling of narcotic drugs. The drug problem still poses a great challenge to the long term security, development and effective governance of Afghanistan. It also represents a significant risk to the stability of the entire region and beyond.

Since last year when we gathered to discuss the international drug control item before this committee, Afghanistan has made major progress in combating drugs. As a result of our efforts in fighting narcotics as well as in implementing Afghanistan’s
National Drug Control Strategy, we are witnessing a significant decrease in the cultivation and production of opium in Afghanistan.

The Afghanistan Opium Survey released in August 2008 reported a 19 per cent decrease in opium cultivation to 157,000 hectares, compared to the record harvest of 193,000 in 2007 and also reported that opium production has dropped by 6 per cent from 8,200 tons to 7,700 tons.

We have come a long way since 2006, when only 6 of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces were opium free. According to the report, the number of opium free provinces in Afghanistan has increased by almost 50 per cent since last year, from 13 to 18, making 50% of the country virtually poppy free. The most impressive result is in Nangarhar province which was Afghanistan’s second highest opium producing province in 2007 and is opium free today.

In view of these achievements, we would like to emphasize that this trend is the result of continuous efforts undertaken by the Government of Afghanistan to fight narcotics through a combination of law enforcement and economic measures as well as strong leadership demonstrated by local governors to discourage farmers from planting opium through campaigns against its cultivation, peer pressure, and the promotion of alternative development.

Today, it is imperative to consolidate recent gains by including local authorities and other important local players such as elders, shuras and religious leaders to raise awareness of and to advocate for viable alternatives to opium.
Mr. Chairman,

The production and trafficking of illegal drugs presents a major threat to the security of our country and is directly linked to the financing of terrorist and illegal activities. The distinct geographical overlap between regions of opium production and insecurity demonstrates the inextricable link between drugs and terrorist activities. In fact, 98 per cent of the opium is grown in just seven provinces in the south west of Afghanistan - Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan, Farah, Nimroz, Daykundi and Zabul - where the Taliban and Al Qaida attempt to continue their campaign of terror.

We would like to stress the need to intensify our efforts in breaking the link between opium production and terrorism in order to create a stable, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan.

Mr. Chairman,

Lack of security, extreme poverty, and pressure from traffickers and local criminal groups are the main causes of expansion of poppy cultivation. H.E. President Karzai in his statement to the 63rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly stated that, and I quote: “Keys to sustaining our success will be ensuring alternative livelihoods for our farmers, greater investment in law enforcement and interdiction and above all, addressing the far greater dimensions of the world’s drug trade that lie outside Afghanistan, such as reduction of demand in foreign markets and stricter border control.”

In this regard, I would like to underline the urgent need for the international community to provide coordinated practical assistance and other resources to ensure the successful implementation of our National Drug Control Strategy especially in the following areas:
Afghanistan on the World Stage

- drug law enforcement measures
- alternative livelihood programmes with a focus on poverty alleviation
- regional cooperation initiatives

We would like to take this opportunity to particularly emphasize the need to channel financial resources allocated to counter narcotics efforts in Afghanistan through the Afghan Counter Narcotics Trust Fund.

Mr. Chairman,

The impact of rising global food prices combined with drought has significantly increased domestic food prices and created a food crisis in Afghanistan. However, it has made wheat an attractive, licit alternative to opium. The gross income ratio of opium to wheat (per hectare) in 2007 was 10:1 and this year it decreased to 3:1. Nevertheless, as Antonio Maria Costa recently justly warned, “Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world, and the latest food crisis has made farmers even more vulnerable. Opium is a seasonal plant. It may be gone today, but back again tomorrow.” The creation of alternative livelihood is a vital factor in sustaining the voluntary lower cultivation of opium.

Mr. Chairman,

Although the global demand for illicit drugs does not appear to be increasing, there are still 25 million drug users in the world. In this context, we would like to emphasize a crucial point that has also been expressed in the report of the Secretary General A/63/111 and reaffirmed during the work of the fifty-first session of the Commission on Narcotics Drugs this year. The world drug problem is a common and shared responsibility that requires an integrated, balanced and sustainable approach through national and international measures. It also necessitates
a balanced approach between demand reduction and supply reduction, bearing in mind that successful supply reduction efforts in drug producing regions had been partially offset by the continued demand for drugs in all parts of the world. We would like to remind this esteemed committee that our counter-narcotic efforts are more likely to succeed if supported by demand reduction in drug consuming countries.

Mr. Chairman,

On June 11, 2008, the Security Council Members adopted resolution S/RES/1817 calling on States to bolster cooperation in counter drug trade matters which undermine the security and development of Afghanistan. This resolution also included recommendations for strengthening the monitoring of international trade in chemical precursors and for preventing attempts to divert the substances from licit international trade for illicit use in Afghanistan. In this regard we stress the need to stop the diversion and smuggling of precursor chemicals that could be used in Afghanistan to process heroin.

Mr. Chairman,

Afghanistan is a landlocked country. Traffickers transport drug consignments from Afghanistan through our neighboring countries and other transit states to European markets. Strong enforcement measures for the control of borders, and mutual cooperation among judicial and law enforcement authorities in these countries would contribute significantly to the fight against narcotics. In fact, increased intelligence sharing and joint operations in 2008 have resulted in major seizures of acetic anhydride in Afghanistan, in neighboring countries, and en route to the region. Preventing these chemicals from reaching Afghanistan will make heroin production a much riskier and more costly business.
In this regard, we would like to underscore the need to implement the trilateral agreement signed by Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan in June 2007, which committed the countries to carry out more joint border operations and increase information sharing.

Finally Mr. Chairman,

We are grateful to the International Community as a whole and especially UNODC for their invaluable support to the Government of Afghanistan’s counter narcotics efforts. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank our neighboring countries for their cooperation in fighting drug production and trafficking in the region. We wish to remind our friendly neighboring countries to take into consideration the latest UNODC publications that include, the World Drug Report 2008 and the Afghanistan Opium Survey 2008 as well as the UN Secretary General’s report A/63/11, before they make any assessment regarding Afghanistan’ narcotics challenge. As I previously mentioned Afghanistan is making significant progress that has led to a considerable decrease in opium cultivation and production. I firmly believe that these achievements should be acknowledged and supported in a concerted way by our regional partners. Afghanistan is cognizant that this progress can be reversed if we do not sustain our attention and intensify our joint efforts to make our region free from the scourge of drugs.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.
Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Government of Afghanistan, I would like to fully align with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

The situation of women in Afghanistan began to attract the international community’s attention when the barbaric regime of the Taliban, in power in Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, implemented its discriminatory and totalitarian policies aimed at excluding women from the political, economical, social and cultural life of Afghanistan. Never in the world’s modern history has a regime been more cruel, repressive and misogynistic than under the Taliban’s rule. Based on a wrong interpretation of Islam, basic rights such as the right to free movement, to education, to work as well as to receive health care were denied to women for five long years. A whole generation of Afghan women has been deprived of the fundamentals of knowledge that would have allowed them to aspire to a better future.

The fall of the regime of the Taliban has contributed to liberating Afghan women from the oppression that they were subjected to and has allowed them to regain their position in Afghan society as equal citizens benefiting from the same rights and having the same duties as their male counterparts. Today,
seven years after the beginning of the stabilization, reconstruction and development of the country, significant progress has been achieved in Afghanistan to restore women’s equal participation in all aspects of life and reduce gender disparities.

Mr. Chairman,

The empowerment of Afghan women through the defense and promotion of their rights is a top priority in Afghanistan’s political agenda. A strong policy framework has been established to allow the implementation of this vision. The Afghan constitution, the Afghanistan Compact, the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and the Afghan Millennium Development Goals Report place gender equality as a core objective. Afghanistan has also ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Children (CRC) as well as CRC’s two Optional Protocols.

The efforts undertaken by the Government of Afghanistan to advance the status of Afghan women have not been limited to the enshrinement of policy documents. We have made significant progress in political, economic, social and human rights areas; allow me to share some of them with you.

Afghan women are participating more in the political arena. As a matter of fact, Afghan women represent 28% of the National Assembly and account for almost 26% of all civil servants. Moreover, Afghan women are no longer excluded from professional activities and play a significant role in Afghanistan’s economic sector. For instance, they represent 30% of agricultural workers.

Afghan women’s access to health care has improved through the development of the Basic Package of Health Services which
includes emergency obstetric care. In addition, the number of health care workers has increased to 15,001 in 2007, of which 49.3% are women.

In the area of education, 40% of the 6 million children enrolled in school are girls. In universities and other institutes of higher education, about twenty percent of 50,000 students are females. Recently, 58.8% of students enrolling in Teacher Training Institutions in Afghanistan were female.

Mr. Chairman,

The Government has also intensified its efforts to mainstream gender equality and implement the various commitments of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Each Ministry has established a unit to facilitate the monitoring of the implementation of the ten year Afghan National Action Plan for Women (NAPWA). Moreover a Gender Budgeting Unit has been established in the Ministry of Finance that focuses on policies and resource allocation to specific programmes for women.

Nevertheless the capacity of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MOWA) needs to be significantly enhanced to be able to coordinate this effort, to provide technical assistance and gender training to the various Ministries, and to monitor the overall implementation of NAPWA.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite the intensification of efforts provided by our Government and the progress achieved, the resurgence of extremist ideologies and activities of the Taliban as well as widespread poverty contribute to difficulties Afghan women face today. This reality brings back haunting memories of
challenges to Afghan women’s security, economic and social activities and human rights.

Although Afghan women’s lack of access to health services is mainly caused by illiteracy, poverty, lack of roads or transportation, and a limited number of female health professionals, the deterioration of the security situation caused by the Taliban has contributed to further impeding women’s access to health facilities. This constitutes an obstacle to reversing the serious statistic in which an Afghan woman dies every 30 minutes because of pregnancy related complications.

The access to education facilities of Afghan women, especially in rural areas, is limited by the lack of female teachers, the remote location of schools, and the bad roads and transportation. In addition, the terror campaign carried out by the Taliban has particularly affected girls’ enrollment in schools and attendance in provinces located in the south and east of the country. Schools are burned and female teachers and girl students are attacked, threatened or intimidated by the Taliban. According to the Ministry of Education, girls represent less than 15% of the total enrollment in nine provinces in the east and the south of Afghanistan.

The Government of Afghanistan believes that the sustainable reconstruction and development of the country require full and equal participation of Afghan women in socio-economic activities of Afghanistan. However, women in Afghanistan are more unlikely than men to be engaged in economic activities when they are insecure.

Mr. Chairman,

Violence against women is an odious violation of human rights that needs to be tackled with intense efforts. The Government of Afghanistan criminalizes violence against women and is
strongly committed to working to address this issue through new initiatives. The Ministry of Women’s Affairs has teamed with UNIFEM to develop a comprehensive database of cases concerning violence against women in order to be able to better address reported cases.

Mr. Chairman,

Poverty remains the biggest obstacle in Afghanistan in achieving MDG3. We would like to stress the need for a full partnership and expanded cooperation with the international community in our mutual commitment to attain the MDGs and advance the status of women in the world. In that regard, we highlight the need for a considerable increase in the level of Official Development Assistance (ODA) for Least Developed Countries, particularly countries emerging from conflict, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Finally Mr. Chairman,

The upcoming elections in Afghanistan are crucial to the future of the Afghan people for many reasons. Not only will we be cementing the achievements we have made in establishing a new democracy, but the people of Afghanistan will once again express their opposition to the perverse treatment of women and the barbaric injustice of the Taliban. However, the Taliban are continuing their intimidation campaign against the Afghan people, and if the international community does not rise to confront this challenge by the supporting the efforts of the democratic Government of Afghanistan, our achievements in the past seven years and all of the gains Afghan women have made will be in jeopardy.

Thank you for your attention.
Afghanistan on the World Stage
Third Committee Debate on Agenda Item 39: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

November 5, 2008

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to thank the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for his detailed report which contains useful information about the situation of the 1.4 million refugees and 52 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) remaining worldwide. My Delegation strongly supports UNHCR’s noble mandate and particularly commends its long engagement with Afghans for over a quarter of a century. In the current context, UNHCR is providing precious support to the Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation in protecting and supporting Afghan Refugees, Returnees and IDPs, and in creating conditions conducive for the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return and reintegration of Afghan Refugees after decades of war in the country.

Mr. Chairman,

The three decades of devastating conflict in Afghanistan forced millions of Afghans to go into exile; leaving behind their families, property, and motherland to escape from the brutality of war. Since the fall of the atrocious regime of the Taliban in 2001, which also marked the beginning of the reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, more than 5.4 million Afghans have returned to their homeland, mainly from Pakistan and Iran. This year alone, almost a quarter million Afghan refugees from Pakistan and another 3,000 from Iran have voluntarily returned to Afghanistan with the hopes of getting back to their places of origins: their villages, and rejoining their families to live
peacefully again in their native land. Nevertheless some 3 million Afghans still remain in Pakistan (2.1 million) and Iran (915,000).

The Government of Afghanistan is grateful to those countries, especially our neighbors Pakistan and Iran, for having hosted our compatriots during the ravaging years of conflict in Afghanistan and for continuing their assistance to Afghans living in their lands. Afghanistan’s main objective in 2008 and 2009 will be to improve conditions for voluntary repatriation as well as reintegration of returnees, in conformity with the objectives contained in our National Development Strategy (ANDS) and in line with the spirit of the tripartite agreements on voluntary repatriation signed with the Governments of Iran, Pakistan, and UNHCR.

The voluntary return and reintegration of all Afghans refugees is a priority for our Government and we would like to underline the importance of the provision contained in the tripartite agreement which stresses the need to facilitate voluntary repatriation of Afghan Refugees from Iran and Pakistan if the conditions inside Afghanistan allow. We would like to seize this opportunity to call for sustained international assistance to create a feasible environment for the voluntary, gradual, safe and dignified return and reintegration of Afghan Refugees.

We welcome the temporary suspension of UNHCR’s assisted voluntary repatriation operation from Pakistan to Afghanistan during the annual winter break, in view of the difficulties that it could engender for the reintegration of Afghan Refugees.

Mr. Chairman,

Effective and sustainable reintegration requires economic and social development and the provision of employment opportunities, especially in the rural areas. Many returnees are
facing reintegration difficulties including lack of land, shelter, water and basic services such as health care and education. The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation of Afghanistan (MRRA) is monitoring the voluntary, dignified and gradual nature of returns and focuses on the provision of key physical, legal and material necessities linked to the reintegration process. MRRA, in partnership with UNHCR, provides individual assistance including the allocation of the repatriation and initial reinstallation cash grant which is complemented by reintegration programmes particularly in the sectors of shelter, water and income generation. These public programmes include:

- Shelter assistance for the most vulnerable families
- Allocation of land to landless returnees
- Legal and employment individual assistance
- Particular assistance to women and girls with the support of the Ministry of Women of Affairs (MOWA)

Mr. Chairman,

Insecurity is the main obstacle to the return of Afghan Refugees and their effective as well as sustainable reintegration. The majority of this year’s returnees have resettled in the eastern, central, or northern part of Afghanistan. The deterioration of the security situation in the south of Afghanistan caused by the terrorists activities of the Taliban and Al-Qaida have created difficult conditions for returnees and restricted the scope of humanitarian assistance, as justly mentioned in the Report of the High Commissioner for Refugees. We commend the work done by UNHCR staff operating under those difficult conditions and are deeply concerned about the prevailing insecurity in certain areas impeding the access of humanitarian assistance to the population, including the vulnerable returnees.
Moreover, the global rise in food prices, the current drought and approaching winter have resulted in high dependence on humanitarian assistance. The Afghanistan -UN joint appeal launched in January 2008 to address this issue asked for additional financial mobilisation in response to the impending crisis. Thus far only 32% of our identified need has been met.

Mr. Chairman,

It is estimated that a total of some 540,000 Afghan refugees will return home in the next two years. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan and UNHCR will co-host an International Conference on return and reintegration on November 19 in Kabul. This conference aims to address how best to ensure the sustainable return of refugees and IDP’s and seeks to reconcile the repatriation targets and timelines proposed by the neighboring countries with the increasingly challenging operational environment in Afghanistan.

It will also be a forum to mobilize additional resources for a comprehensive, integrated approach and multi-year funding delivered through the framework of ANDS.

We would like to take this opportunity to invite Members States to participate in this conference at the highest level possible. We are looking forward to the outcomes of the conference and we invite the participants to take into consideration the following important issues in their discussion:

- To incorporate Afghan refugees’ needs into ANDS through national development programmes particularly in key sectors such as health, education, sanitation and employment.

- To ensure that areas to which refugees return are properly provided with basic amenities as well as the means for making a livelihood.
- To give priority to rural economies for future development programmes as a tool to achieve successful and sustainable return of refugees, bearing in mind that 80% of Afghanistan’s population lives in rural areas.

- To keep the spirit of partnership and openness to look for a comprehensive solution to the question of Afghan refugee in order to make further progress towards an integrated and coherent solution, that will ensure the interests of Afghanistan, its neighbors and the region.

At the closing, Mr. Chairman,

We would like to express our gratitude to the international community and other relevant UN agencies for their support to the plight of Afghan refugees and internally displaced persons. No sign of confidence in a country’s future is more compelling than the return of its citizens to participate in the upcoming Presidential election. Afghan refugees will not hesitate to return home if Afghanistan achieves to cement peace, security, prosperity and justice. We count on your continued support and remain committed to work together to fulfill our commitments made during the Paris Donor Conference in June 2008, to ensure the conditions for voluntary and sustainable returns of Afghans to their homeland.

Thank you for your attention.
Afghanistan on the World Stage
Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me to address this august assembly on the occasion of the annual resolution on “The Situation in Afghanistan.” I would also like to thank the delegation of Germany for their dedication and work in drafting and negotiating this resolution, as well as convey my gratefulness for the support of all of the co-sponsors to this resolution. Within this resolution, your voices have shown renewed solidarity to a stronger, more peaceful Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

It has been more than seven years that international forces have entered our country. With so much time passed and so much focus on particular complexities, we may sometimes lose sight of the original noble purpose for our work in Afghanistan.

What is this noble purpose? We are in Afghanistan to prevent the malady of terrorism from infesting a nation and the world. We are here to proclaim together: No longer again will the Taliban regime have control of a country and crush the hopes, dreams and lives of their own people. No longer again should Al Qaeda have sanctuaries in Afghanistan and elsewhere to project its extremist terror to kill thousands of innocent people across the world.
We are also here so that the region and the world can enjoy the new wealth and prosperity of a strong Afghanistan that can offer new avenues for economic cooperation and trade routes. We are here so that a strong Afghanistan can serve as an example of a democratic Islamic country that can bridge communities and peoples of all faiths and cultures.

Let us hold this original purpose as the light to the dark challenges that lay before us today.

These challenges are critical. Terrorists commit increasingly brutal acts, killing teachers, aid workers, families. Terrorist activities also have an increasingly strong correlation with crime and narcotics. In addition, the Government of Afghanistan faces serious obstacles in its quest to fight corruption, hold elections, build a strong justice sector and increase economic development. And most importantly, the food shortage threatens more than eight million Afghan lives this upcoming winter, only a few weeks away.

Simultaneously, the world is facing the worst financial and credit crisis since the Second World War. Just as terrorism is a threat with no boundaries, the financial squeeze is affecting us all. While Afghanistan is fighting serious challenges with international ramifications, there is also a tightening of resources. It seems that we must do more, with less.

Mr. President,

To meet this challenge, we need to embark on a smart and sustainable strategy in Afghanistan that can harness our resources most effectively. Such a smart and sustainable strategy will always be guided primarily by the interests of the Afghanistan people and have as its foremost goal the creation of a self-sustaining Afghanistan. Such a strategy will have the following components:
1. Afghan ownership should increase at every level and in every dimension.

The Afghan National Army and National Police must increase in number and in strength for Afghans to protect Afghans. For this end, the Government of Afghanistan has ambitious goals to increase trainings, develop a comprehensive reform strategy, and expand the size of our army to 134,000 troops by 2010. To meet these goals, we need continued international support.

In addition, the Government of Afghanistan is fighting corruption with the reorganization of its ministries, the work of the Independent Directorate of Local Governance, and the launching of the High Office of Oversight for Anti-Corruption. International support for these government initiatives would allow the government to improve the delivery of national services to Afghan people.

The Government of Afghanistan also aims to increase Afghan ownership of reconstruction and development efforts. While international support is necessary to strengthen our agricultural sector, to create new infrastructure projects and sources of energy, and to find new areas for local economy, we hope that this international support will increasingly be accomplished through the framework provided by our Afghan National Development Strategy.

Furthermore, the upcoming elections are a most important opportunity to increase ownership of Afghanistan by qualified Afghans. Fair, credible and timely elections are essential to strengthening legitimacy and creating a self-sustaining Afghanistan. However, security is the main precondition for holding elections. The Government of Afghanistan hopes for the support of the international community in its efforts to provide this security.
Lastly, the ingredients of a political solution to Afghanistan must involve the Afghan people and their communities. In order for any talks for reconciliation and the peace process to be successful, we must win the confidence of the Afghan people by including them in the process substantively.

2. International involvement should refocus on the overall security of the Afghan people.

The Government of Afghanistan recognizes the necessity of increased international troops to quell the insecurity today. To ensure this increase in international involvement most effectively protects the Afghan people, we should ascertain the following:

First, international troops in Afghanistan should expand its focus. Its goal must go beyond the targeting of the Taliban; its goal should be to protect the comprehensive security of Afghan people. Second, the Government of Afghanistan urges any increase in deployment of troops to be accomplished through further collaboration with the government. Thirdly, international troops need a review of the problem of civilian casualties. Although the Taliban are the reason for a majority of civilian casualties, the international forces for their part can do more to reduce the risk of civilian casualties. To build a self-sustaining Afghanistan, the people must be able to trust their government and its allies to protect their lives and their families.

In addition, the Government of Afghanistan deeply appreciates UNAMA’s efforts to address the human development component of security. Their mandate to deliver aid more effectively is an enormously important one at this time of limited resources. But in order for Kai Eide and UNAMA to meet this task, the financial resources they need to operate effectively must be addressed by member states. In turn, the
Government of Afghanistan pledges to continue to work collaboratively with UNAMA.

3. A reemphasis on regional partnerships is necessary.

The challenges Afghanistan faces today are regional challenges. The Taliban and Al-Qaeda, the movement of refugees, and the narcotics trade are trans-border problems. Moreover, regional solutions promise great regional benefits in the areas of security, trade, energy, infrastructure and more positive people-to-people relationships. Thus we should strive together to find regional solutions to our shared challenges.

Our first priority is the relationship Afghanistan shares with our friends in Pakistan. They suffer equal harm at the hands of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. To fight these terrorists who would kill our people, we must work together to eliminate the sanctuaries for these terrorists. The Government of Afghanistan increasingly recognizes that the only lasting peace is one that is forged together with our allies in the region. Thus, the support of the international community for such regional efforts is essential.

Mr. President,

At this time of great challenges, there is also reason for great hope.

In these seven years, we have taken some significant steps forward. We have built schools, health clinics, roads, and telecommunications infrastructure. We are making progress on human rights and the rule of law. Even as we speak, we are seeing a breakthrough in counter-narcotics efforts. As we stated in October, the Taliban are fighting a war of perception. Their goal is to persuade the Afghan people that the international community is failing, especially at this time of transition after
the US elections. To counter this, we must be equally vigilant in demonstrating our successes to the Afghan people. We know that there are two Afghanistans: one conveyed by news reports broadcasting only the atrocities, the other experienced by millions of Afghans building daily lives in peace. Let us not forget this second Afghanistan: our efforts are not in vain and we are making progress.

Today is also a day of great hope because there is a new beginning in two of Afghanistan’s most important allies. With Pakistan’s new President H.E. Mr. Asif Ali Zardari, we are witnessing the first moves toward collaboration and cooperation that we hope will lead to peace and security. With the United States, we welcome the recent historical elections and look forward to working with the president-elect Mr. Barack Obama. We appreciate the continued support of the United States in Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

Today is a most important day. We have reminded ourselves of our original, noble purpose for our work in Afghanistan. Success in Afghanistan is as vital today as it was seven years ago. And, within the context of a global financial crisis, we have identified the components for a smart and sustainable strategy to harness our resources most effectively.

For our part, the Government of Afghanistan is fully and absolutely dedicated to a stronger Afghanistan. Every international effort that is committed today to fulfilling the objectives of this resolution will be matched by our government’s efforts twice-fold. In the upcoming months, let us together have the courage to determinedly and resolutely walk this path forward to a self-sustaining, peaceful, prosperous Afghanistan.
Statements given at the Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform during the 63rd GA

by H.E. Zahir Tanin, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the United Nations, New York and Chair of the Intergovernmental Negotiations on the question of equitable representation and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council
Ambassador Tanin serves as Chairman to an informal plenary during the Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council reform in the 63rd Session of the GA.
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

* It is a pleasure and a privilege to be here with you today. I want to thank Minister Frattini for his hospitality, for opening his door to us. In the new phase of the Security Council reform process, all involved will have to open the door to compromise. All initiatives to that end are considered welcome by yours truly, as Chair of the Intergovernmental Negotiations on behalf of the President of the UN General Assembly. After wrapping up the previous phase of the reform process to everybody’s satisfaction, the President and I look forward to continuing our close cooperation with the entire UN Membership in New York. Let me now direct a few words to the delegations gathered here in Rome.

* I was always told: when speaking in Rome, quote a classical author. Sorry, it’s not a Roman author but a Greek one, Thucydides. His seminal work “The History of the Peloponnesian War” was the book that launched a thousand debates about the relationship between power and legitimacy. In the battle between Athens and Melos, the Melians were completely overpowered, but appealed to the higher power of international law to argue for their survival. “In our view,” they said, “it is at any rate useful that you should not destroy a principle that is to the general good of all men - namely, that in the case of all who fall into danger there should be such a thing as fair play and just dealing,” end of quote. That assertion that might does not make right, started off mankind’s odyssey towards finding a balance between power and legitimacy. The
current effort at the United Nations in New York to reform the Security Council is a part of that journey.

* As an observer to today’s meeting, what I first and foremost observe is the will to reform. The will to achieve the objective set at the 2005 World Summit, when our leaders called for, and I quote, “an early reform of the Security Council - an essential element of our overall effort to reform the United Nations - in order to make it more broadly representative, efficient and transparent and thus to further enhance its effectiveness and the legitimacy and implementation of its decisions,” end of quote.

* As you all know, the President of the General Assembly last week announced that on February 19, we will finally sit down at the negotiating table. At the same time, he assured Member States that these negotiations will be conducted strictly according to the principles set forth by the Membership in General Assembly decision 62/557, and I quote: “in good faith, with mutual respect and in an open, inclusive and transparent manner” and “seeking a solution that can garner the widest possible political acceptance by Member States,” end of quote.

* The President of the General Assembly also let it be known, that on February 19 we will present a work plan for the negotiations. A crystal clear plan on how to negotiate and when to negotiate - beginning shortly with meetings on the five key issues: categories of membership, the question of the veto, regional representation, size of an enlarged Council and working methods of the Security Council, and the relationship between the Council and the General Assembly. The President and I will do everything in our power to safeguard the integrity of the process and the achievement of progress. Decisive progress. Our lodestar will of course be decision 62/557, and we will be guided by the UN Charter, the World Summit Outcome Document, the relevant UN rules and procedures,
legal advice, past practice and input from Member States through the Open-ended Working Group.

* Nothing would do more to stir up cynicism about the United Nations than us wasting this historic opportunity for change. We have to rise to the occasion and not get bogged down. We decided - now we must follow through. I would almost quote Julius Caesar and say: “The die is cast.” There’s no turning back. But we all know that when he said those words, when he crossed the Rubicon, Caesar started a war against Rome. So in that sense, the quote is inappropriate - the effort to reform the Council is not about combat but about cooperation. We’re all on the same side here. The side fighting for a reformed Security Council and a renewed United Nations.

Thank you.
Launch of Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform

February 19, 2009

Opening remarks

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

1. “The Untied Nations” - that is how the name of the newborn organization was spelled in one of the San Francisco documents. Accidentally misspelled, for the objective of the UN was exactly the opposite of untying nations. The world body was brought into the world in 1945 to strengthen the mutual ties between countries and to tie their behavior to international law. In order to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, the UN Charter endowed in particular the Security Council with sweeping powers. Yet it is said that its real impact derives not just from such legal provisions but to a large extent also from its perceived legitimacy. Let me quote for example Harvard professor Joseph Nye, who said: “What the UN can convey that is particularly important is legitimacy, an important part of soft power.” End of quote. For the UN Security Council, remaining relevant therefore requires retaining legitimacy. Yet it is here that we have a lot of work on our hands. Just look at the UN logo. It was approved back in 1946 and depicts the world surrounded by olive branches - by now, that world has changed so profoundly, that the profoundly unchanged organization’s ability to bear the olive branch of peace is severely at risk. Peace and security cannot be maintained by a Security Council that is out of date and out of touch. A young and charismatic American president led the way when he said, and I quote: “The United Nations cannot survive as a static organization. Its obligations are increasing as
well as its size. Its Charter must be changed as well as its customs. The authors of that Charter did not intend that it be frozen in perpetuity.” End of quote. That was John F. Kennedy at the opening of the 18th GA session in 1963, the last and only time the Council’s composition was updated. Now we are in GA session number 63 and once more face the responsibility to reform.

2. This chance for change has been three decades in the making. It was India together with Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Guyana, Maldives, Nepal, Nigeria and Sri Lanka that in 1979 planted the seed by asking the General Assembly to include a new item on its agenda: “Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters”. It was September 11 and its aftermath that laid bare the urgent need to adapt the Security Council to the come-back of international insecurity, propelling the item towards the top of the UN’s agenda. At the 2005 World Summit, our leaders rallied behind the objective of, and I quote, “an early reform, of the Security Council - an essential element of our overall effort to reform the United Nations - in order to make it more broadly representative, efficient and transparent and thus to further enhance its effectiveness and the legitimacy and implementation of its decisions,” end of quote. Our leaders thus already spelled out what the objective of Security Council reform is. What they did not tell us, of course, was their definition of “early reform”. However, as the President of the General Assembly has asserted, it would seem safe to say, that they did not mean to see another World Summit pass us by with the status quo intact. There is no reason why we should fail them, for today we at long last leave the antechamber of reform and walk into the negotiation room. Landmark Decision 62/557 opened that door on 15 September 2008. On this historic day, we should be thankful to all who worked hard to create this opportunity and, at the same time, we should be mindful of the responsibility not
to squander it. Outside the negotiation room, the world finds itself in a state of flux. With the economic dominoes falling, some even augur a new Great Depression. And as we all know, that crisis set the stage for a war that brought untold sorrow to mankind - a history the UN is supposed to stop us from repeating. In these dangerous days, we cannot stop at repairing our economic institutions, our system of collective security must be reformed along with it. We don’t have the luxury of leaving one the two for another day. Coming from where I come from, I know first-hand how intimately peace and prosperity are related and that both deserve first-tier priority. Coming from where I come from, I know how crucial the Council’s work is to peace on Earth, to peace on the ground. Security Council reform forms a centerpiece of today’s Herculean effort to reshape global governance.

3. Fortunately, as the last couple of months have also shown, the fire in which Decision 62/557 was forged still burns. We must keep that fire of collective commitment going, because if we let narrow self-interest prevail, we might miss the narrow opportunity for decisive progress. While the onus is mostly on Member States, the President of the General Assembly and I, as Chair of the Intergovernmental Negotiations on his behalf, will do everything in our power to prevent that from happening. At the successful first meeting of this informal plenary, the President vowed to very soon undertake his responsibility to take the process forward. That time has now come. Yesterday morning, delegations already received the work plan announced on January 29. The plan is the result of a painstaking and diligent exercise of deduction. From that exercise, while guided by the authoritative sources the President identified in his 29 January address, we concluded that this is the work plan that emanates from Decision 62/557. What is more, the plan, setting out how to negotiate and when to negotiate, also does justice to the overwhelming and across-the-board appetite among Member States to get started - not with negotiations on the
negotiations, but with negotiations on the substance. For too long, we have been dipping our toes in the water. Now, at long last, we finally dive into these negotiations. If we rush the process and swim back to the surface too quickly, we might not survive because of decompression sickness. But on the other hand, if we stay under too long, we will run out of air and surely succumb. I don’t believe that either fate will befall us, because I believe that you will rise to the challenge. Let us now take a deep breath before we dive into the deep end on March 4, commencing the implementation of our work plan. Every day, every way possible, I will help you with that, as described in the letter of the President. We are of course impartial to any of the positions, but partial to progress.

Thank you.
Closing remarks

1. Let me close the meeting now by thanking all delegations for their support and for their constructive participation. Our meeting today has only strengthened my conviction that we will be able to achieve decisive progress without unnecessary delay. Obviously I cannot prejudge the specifics of the process ahead. But I can tell you that, whatever happens, for the President and me, from start to finish, our lodestar will continue to be Decision 62/557, and that we will continue to be guided by the UN Charter, the World Summit Outcome Document, the relevant rules and procedures, legal advice, past practice and your input through the Open-ended Working Group. I will carefully study the many suggestions brought forward today, including the composition of a composite paper. In any case, as indicated by the President of the General Assembly in his letter, I will use all means at my disposal, including oral statements and letters concerning the individual meetings, to guide Member States during the coming consecutive negotiation meetings about the five key issues. It is on these issues that the President of the General Assembly has invited you to focus in a comprehensive fashion. For all five, it is about providing more detail and where possible showing flexibility on your position, including through new proposals. We meet in an informal setting. This should mean brief interventions and interaction. I will certainly encourage that to the best of my abilities. Let me clarify, that an individual meeting could go on for longer than one day, so that we do justice to the scope of every single issue. We should not have any illusions: these are complicated matters, in other words, we are on thin ice. However, as Ralph Waldo Emerson once said: “In skating over thin ice, our safety is our speed.” So let’s speedily continue with intergovernmental negotiations “in good faith, with mutual respect and in an open, inclusive and transparent manner […] seeking a solution that can garner the widest possible political acceptance by Member States.”
Opening Remarks

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

1. Today, without further delay, we proceed to negotiations on the substance of Security Council reform – in this case the key issue of categories of membership. Two days ago, Member States through the Secretariat already received a letter from the Chair of the Intergovernmental Negotiations. Through this letter, I provided guidance to the membership on the path to decisive progress, in strict conformity with the Work Plan elaborated by the President of the General Assembly and embraced by Member States during our successful 19 February launch of the Intergovernmental Negotiations. It is up to Member States themselves to walk down that path to decisive progress, they are the masters of their own destiny. As Chair of the Intergovernmental Negotiations I am merely lighting beacons that show the way towards the implementation of GA Decision 62/557, thereby discharging my own responsibilities to the best of my abilities.

2. While it is not my intention to repeat the content of my letter here, let me make the following three points before we get going on the substance.

3. One: this is an opportunity to, if necessary, further clarify your original position regarding categories of membership, but most of all, to show some flexibility on it, including through
new proposals. I encourage all delegations to show flexibility at the first instance – don’t wait for others, the first-mover advantage is up for grabs.

4. Two: benefiting from suggestions from all sides, I have set up the meeting so as to facilitate a productive exchange between Member States. That is why I will enable Member States, if they so wish, to intervene a second time and thereby react to and reciprocate the flexibility shown by their peers. This is particularly relevant if the speaking order has prevented them from doing so at their first opportunity to speak. To make such interaction possible, Member States are urged to be concise and limit their interventions to no longer than three minutes. The time for long statements is now long passed, please make it short and sweet. Again, this is no rigid straightjacket, but simply what I in my capacity of Chair promote as a straightway towards decisive progress. I want to see both that progress eventually accomplished and all delegations meanwhile accommodated. I call on all to leave some space for your colleagues to pronounce themselves on an issue vital to each and every one of us.

5. Three: if we need more time than a day, I will of course accommodate that, with the continuation preferably planned for the day immediately thereafter. In any case, however, we are to uphold the schedule as laid out in the President’s Work Plan, with the meetings on the next two key issues planned for respectively 16 and 25 March, while adhering to Decision 62/557 by simply following the order of key issues established therein by the membership.

6. I cannot prejudge what lies ahead, but, as I wrote in my letter, I am confident that the good faith and mutual respect in full display at our successful 19 February launch of the negotiations will take us very far very fast. Thank you.
Closing Remarks
March 5, 2009

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

1. In closing, I want to thank delegations for welcoming my letter and for making this a very productive exchange. Good faith and mutual respect once again reigned supreme, as I am sure they will at our next meeting, scheduled for March 16. During that meeting, we are to address the question of the veto, thereby simply following the order of key issues as established by Member-States themselves through GA Decision 62/557, which the President of the General Assembly has described as our road map. I say this in response to suggestions to change that order. However, the interconnectedness and the different degrees of convergence regarding the five key issues shall be duly taken into account in the set-up of the second round.

2. After Member States finish the first round before the end of April, in the absence of an official record, I will provide them with an overview, in strict conformity with the Work Plan elaborated by the President of the General Assembly and embraced by Member States during our successful 19 February launch of the Intergovernmental Negotiations. It will be comprehensive in the sense of covering all the five key issues, which after all form the organizing principle of this first round. Other than that I clearly cannot prejudge its content, which lies in the hands and rests on the shoulders of Member States.

3. In my humble opinion, yesterday and today you have made headway in that sense – headway towards accomplishing that goal of early reform set in 2005 by our own leaders. I think that, yesterday and today we have laid a solid foundation for the fulfillment of the task entrusted to us this session.
4. One last remark: for the next meeting, we will make use of a list of speakers. So no more competition on who first raises the nameplate, just competition on who shows most flexibility. I firmly intend to keep doing my job as Chair of these Intergovernmental Negotiations by calling for that flexibility, which is key to any negotiation and to any solution.

Thank you very much.
Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform:  
First Round, Second Meeting

March 17, 2009

Opening Remarks

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

1. It is my pleasure and privilege to open this meeting on the question of the veto, key issue number two. The veto, the “I forbid”, is certainly a challenging issue, but of course not forbiddingly so. After how you dealt with categories of membership – head-on but heartily – there is no question you can handle the question of the veto. Last week, Member States once more received a letter of straightforward content, firmly rooted in GA Decision 62/557 and the President’s Work Plan. A letter to help them prepare for this part of the negotiations.

2. As Chair, I will also continue to work my heart out to make these intergovernmental negotiations as interactive as possible. That is why I will again give Member States the opportunity to intervene a second time, and thereby react to and reciprocate the flexibility shown by their peers. This is particularly relevant if the speaking order has prevented them from doing so at their first opportunity to speak. At the same time, Member States are again urged to be concise and limit their interventions to no longer than three minutes.

3. It is in your interest to speak, but perhaps even more to listen to others – our last meeting saw a wide diversity of delegations taking the floor, thereby broadening the floor, broadening our exchange. Making the intergovernmental negotiations not just
interactive but also inclusive, this new breadth has definitely managed to breathe new life into the process.

4. The same can be said of the first signs of flexibility shown by different sides. No one ever said it was easy; it takes courage to open up and reach out to others rather than retreating into rigidity. As the author Alice Swaim said: “Courage is not the towering oak that sees storms come and go; it is the fragile blossom that opens in the snow.” We need a time of spring blossom not just outside but also inside the negotiation room. Everyone knows this time is always short – that is why we need to move expeditiously.

5. Before I quickly pass the floor, let me just inform you that, for reasons of scheduling, we will address the next key issue, regional representation, on March 24 rather than March 25. For now, my three minutes are up, so let us move on to the list of speakers.
Closing Remarks

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

1. My expectations have been more than met – this has been an excellent exchange. I very much look forward to the next one. As I stated in my opening remarks, on March 24 the key issue of regional representation is to be addressed, with a letter circulated well in advance. Hereby I would also like to announce, that on 9 April we will focus on the size of an enlarged Council and working methods of the Security Council, followed on 21 April by a meeting on the relationship between the Council and the General Assembly, the last of the five key issues. The five fingers on the hand of Security Council reform – a hand that should subsequently be able to reach for decisive progress.

Thank you.
Opening Remarks

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

1. It is a pleasure to see you back for another session of our Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council reform. The topic at hand today is of course regional representation, key issue number three. Last week, Member States once more received a letter of straightforward content, firmly rooted in GA Decision 62/557 and the President’s Work Plan. A letter to help them prepare for this part of the negotiations, especially when it comes to the substance.

2. On the procedure, I don’t think I need to remind anyone of the three minutes or the second sequence of interventions – by now, you are all very familiar with how we go about these meetings.

3. But I will keep reminding you of the paramount importance of showing flexibility and of doing so sooner rather than later. Today already marks the halfway point of the first round of our negotiations. Between now and our next meeting on April 9, a score of world leaders will converge on London in an effort to revamp the world economy. Our peace and security institutions cannot stay behind. The Security Council cannot stay behind. Today, the word instability most of all has an economic ring to it, summoning the image of stock prices jumping up and down. But tomorrow, depending on the way of the world, it could be
associated with peace and security again. We need to be fully equipped at the international level to deal with not just incomes falling down but also with peace falling apart. That is why, in the words of the President of the General Assembly, a better Council cannot wait until tomorrow, if we want to have a better tomorrow.

Thank you.
Closing Remarks

March 31, 2009

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

1. I think I represent the views of all regions in stating that this has been an excellent exchange. I thank all delegations for making the debate more than the sum of its parts. Let us retain that synergy for our 9 April exchange on the fourth key issue as defined in GA Decision 62/557, namely size of an enlarged Council and working methods of the Security Council. For scheduling reasons, our subsequent meeting on the relationship between the Council and the General Assembly will take place on April 20 instead of April 21 as previously announced.

Thank you.
Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform: First Round, Fourth Meeting

April 7, 2009

Opening Remarks

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

1. “Everything will be all right - you know when? When people, just people, stop thinking of the United Nations as a weird Picasso abstraction and see it as a drawing they made themselves.”

2. Memorable words by Dag Hammarskjöld, appointed Secretary-General of the UN exactly 56 years ago today. After all this time, we are still trying to create a United Nations in which people, just people, can recognize themselves. Our current effort to redraw, to reform the Security Council so that it reflects today’s world, is a part of that endeavour. I would even say its centerpiece.

3. Now in April, these negotiations were successfully launched in February and gathered considerable momentum in March. After today, only one key issue will be left to discuss before we march on towards the second round, namely the relationship between the Council and the Assembly. Today’s discussion revolves around the size of an enlarged Council and working methods of the Security Council, the fourth key issue as enumerated in GA Decision 62/557. To help you prepare, I last week once again circulated a letter of straightforward content, firmly rooted in that same decision. Now I know that today’s subject matter is vast. But I also know that your ability to
convey concise messages in three minutes is unlimited. Because while the UN itself should not resemble a Picasso painting, its working methods should, with discussions that abstract from less relevant details and highlight the essential — the common ground. If we conduct our work in that fashion, I am sure, everything will be all right.

Thank you.
Closing Remarks

April 8, 2009

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

1. After productive exchanges on the first four key issues, only one is left for us to address. As I stated in my opening remarks, you have generated considerable momentum. To sustain it, new steps forward will be necessary in the second round. But first things first. Let us bring the current round to a successful conclusion by keeping our eye on the ball and by taking a good look at the relationship between the Council and the Assembly. I look forward to seeing you all back on April 20.

Thank you.
Afghanistan on the World Stage

*Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform:*
  *First Round, Fifth Meeting*

*April 20, 2009*

*Opening Remarks*

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

1. Let me open today’s meeting with a couple of short remarks. With the first round of our Intergovernmental Negotiations drawing to a close, I want to offer a compliment to all delegations for their active and interactive participation. What is more, you have acted and reacted, as 62/557 prescribed, in good faith and with mutual respect, translating these words into works.

2. All this hard work has already laid a solid foundation for the second round. But let us not get ahead of ourselves. Not while an issue of such paramount importance remains to be dealt with, namely the relationship between the Council and the General Assembly, two vital organs of our world body.

3. In May, well before the second round commences, you will receive another letter on our further implementation of Decision 62/557 and of the Work Plan, along with the overview prescribed therein.

4. But in the meantime, the adage remains: first things first, first round first. Successfully reaching the end of this round, while also reaching out across the aisle at every opportunity – that is the immediate challenge. Today, before further digesting the results of our productive exchanges and further investing in the relationships with your fellow delegations, you are to focus on another relationship. There seems to be very little that they
cannot accomplish, if the Security Council and the General Assembly join forces as partners in peace and prosperity. Let’s see if we can give them some good relationship advice. The nineteenth-century French poet Marceline Desbordes-Valmore compared a good relationship to being like two chapters in the same book. If true, that’s good news, because at the very least the Council and the Assembly already are two chapters in the same book: the Charter.

Thank you.
Closing Remarks

April 20, 2009

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

1. Thank you for all your wise words on the substance and for all your kind words directed towards the Chair. Facilitating this process has been a pleasure and a privilege so far and I look forward to continuing our partnership for reform in the second round.

2. As I said in my opening remarks, well before that round commences, you will receive another letter on our further implementation of Decision 62/557 and of the Work Plan, along with the overview prescribed therein.

3. According to an age-old saying about theatre pieces, the second act is always the best. It does not need to bother with introductory elements, setting up locations and characters, but can move straight into the meat of the story, before the resolution of its plot lines later on in the play. Let us during this second act, also referred to as “rising action”, rise to the occasion – just like we have done during the current stage.

Thank you.
Afghanistan on the World Stage

Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform:
Second Round, First Exchange

May 22, 2009

Opening Remarks

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

1. And so we start the middle chapter of our reform story. It’s good to see you all back here for the second round of the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform. As any author knows, the middle of a novel is the most challenging part to write. A transitional phase, where the excitement of the beginning threatens to seep away and a satisfying resolution to the story lines is not yet clearly in sight. Therefore, the middle is the place to raise the stakes. With the introduction of the main characters and themes out of the way, more character interaction and narrative action are needed to develop and deepen the plot.

2. Running out of creativity and courage, many novelists get bogged down in the middle. But not you, I am sure. I have faith in you, because you have been working together in good faith, with mutual respect and in an open, inclusive and transparent manner. I count on you to again put pen to paper and to constructively co-author the next chapter.

3. The primary source material for the remainder of your novel is not new: namely, the substantive underpinning of the negotiations as defined in paragraph e of Decision 62/557. As each and every one of us can read, this includes the positions
and proposals of Member States, regional groups and other Member States Groupings. Old or new, oral or written – all of these positions and proposals are still very much on the table as part of that primary source material.

4. What I, as Chair of this process, have tabled at the beginning of this week is simply meant to serve as a source of inspiration. Nothing more, nothing less. It does not in any way supplant the substantive underpinning. Written in strict conformity with the President’s Work Plan, my overview has the solemn purpose not to circumscribe, but to catalyze. And if there is enough political will in this house to make decisive progress, the overview will indeed do just that, will indeed catalyze the process.

5. Since I was appointed, to catalyze has been my objective all along, and I sincerely thank the membership for welcoming and supporting my approach – both objective and steady – all this time. That same approach I brought to the difficult task of composing the first round’s overview – the result might not be perfect, but it is partial in only one way: partial to progress.

6. While the overview is comprehensive in the sense of dealing with all the five key issues and taking all the proceedings into account, it does not and cannot contain all the positions and proposals in all their detail. By its very nature, as the dictionary attests, an overview is a general outline. Although the attached letters, an integral part of the document, do add a great amount of detail, it is especially as a general outline that the overview can concentrate the mind and focus the debate – as opposed to a verbatim account or a laundry list. A debate still firmly based on all your positions and proposals in all their detail.

7. A debate that today, as announced in paragraph 19 of the overview, revolves around the review, not the overview. Review or challenge, to be precise. Right after no less than
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fifteen meetings on the five key issues, this is the right time to really explore a concept that affects them all, namely a review or challenge mechanism – more specifically, its general nature, agenda, timing and frequency. Undeniably, the prospect of a future reassessment impacts what we decide in the present. Given that this impact could extend to each and every aspect of our reform decisions, the concept of review or challenge offers an opportunity to have a more comprehensive discussion – an important wish reiterated all throughout the first round and all throughout the membership. I am granting that wish.

8. Not only is addressing review or challenge a good way to usher out the first round, but also to usher in the second, to start the middle chapter. As I said, this is the chapter where novelists can only advance the story by raising the stakes. In the context of our process, raising the stakes means pushing the envelope on compromise. During the first round, we have seen the first gestures from different sides. Now it is time to follow-through towards a breakthrough. The accent has to move from fleshing out the positions to showing flexibility. Starting out exploring the concept of review or challenge, which cuts across a wide variety of positions and proposals, will help us do just that.

9. Comprehensiveness and compromise will be keywords of this second round. After viewing the five key issues all at once from the perspective of review or challenge, the remainder of the second round will also exhibit the much demanded comprehensive character. Over the course of two exchanges, we will examine the five key issues according to the logic with which the Charter puts them together. During each of these meetings, Member States are of course free to express their views on any matter they deem relevant. It is however part of my responsibility as Chair to, in the interest of compromise, add some structure to the discussions – and what better inspiration for this than the Charter? By the end of June, after two rounds of negotiations, the five key issues will have been considered
both separately and jointly. And all throughout this process, the five key issues as defined in decision 62/557 are still there – untouched, all in one piece, all important in their own right.

10. What I hope also carries over from the first into the second round is your active and interactive participation. As you will have read in my overview, more than three quarters of the membership engaged in the negotiation process, and that is just one of the many interesting statistics at my disposal. I could have included, for example, factual data on which countries adhered to the three minute rule and which did not. Instead, I will merely renew my plea to be short and sweet – in the interest of interactive and active participation. There should be time for everyone who wants to speak and, in the second cycle of interventions, for everyone who wants to respond.

11. It is now time for me to cede the floor myself and listen to you attentively. I have and will continue to undertake my particular responsibility as Chair, discharging my mandate as always with Decision 62/557 as lodestar and guided by the UN Charter, the World Summit Outcome document, the relevant UN rules and procedures, legal advice and past practice. Now I am counting on you to undertake your own responsibility for the future of the process. Based on how far you have already come this session, I hold great expectations about how this story will unfold. It is yours to write. History is yours to write. In time, historians will surely judge this writing effort – judge whether you grasped and grabbed the great opportunity before us. But let this be a consolation: according to the American freethinker H.L. Menken, historians are only failed novelists themselves.

Thank you.
Opening Remarks

May 26, 2009

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

1. It is a great pleasure to see you all back here for the continuation of Exchange 1 of the second round of our intergovernmental negotiations. Before giving the first speaker the floor, allow me to extend two invitations.

2. To begin with, I would like to invite the membership to take another good look at my opening remarks of May 22. During the debate, I listened carefully to all the interventions of Member States, including comments and concerns. Since I sincerely believe my word of welcome that day addressed a fair number of them, I ask Member States to carefully consider it. Copies are of course available in the room.

3. My second invitation concerns our topic for discussion, review or challenge. As a number of delegations already emphasized on Friday, this topic, relevant to all the five key issues as defined in Decision 62/557 and common to a substantial mass of positions and proposals, requires thorough analysis. That is why I would like to invite Member States to work towards reform by further working on that analysis today. After one and a half decade of debate, this is the time not for paralysis but for progress.

Thank you.
Closing Remarks

May 26, 2009

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

1. And so we round out the first of the three exchanges making up the second round of our intergovernmental negotiations. I have listened carefully to all of you. At the outset, one delegation, speaking on behalf of a group of Member States, made a quite appropriate reference to Alice in Wonderland. Indeed, we should be careful not to move forward only to remain in one place, as Alice did. Fortunately, the Red Queen, one of the fantasy characters she meets, had some good advice for Alice, and for all of us, and I quote: “Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!” End of quote.

2. Inspiring Member States to rise above themselves in that way and rise to the occasion – that constitutes my solemn duty as Chair of this process. In fulfilling that duty, my lodestar was, and will continue to be decision 62/557. Its paragraph e spells out the substantive underpinning of our intergovernmental negotiations, and I quote:

“i. The positions and proposals of Member States, regional groups and other Member States groupings; …
iii. The following documents: report of the Open-ended Working Group on its work during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly; General Assembly decision 61/561 and the report of the Open-ended Working Group on its work during the sixty-second session of the General Assembly”.

3. End of quote. There can be no debate or doubt about what these negotiations are based on. Decision 62/557 enshrines the
positions and proposals, like they were explained in speech or in writing by Member States themselves, as the substantitive basis of this process, along with the specified UN documents. In my May 22 opening remarks, I have called this the primary source material.

4. My overview as mandated through the President’s Work Plan, on the other hand, is simply meant to serve as a source of inspiration. Nothing more, nothing less. Inspiration to run twice as fast as you can, in order to get somewhere. We are not dealing with a report or resolution to be adopted or to be changed or amended as was suggested, but with a sovereign contribution from the Chair.

5. There was some concern, that the paragraphs with the principal options do not contain all the positions in all their detail. That, however, was the point. By reflecting the main thrust of the first round and some but not all of the relevant negotiables, this part of the overview can concentrate the mind and focus the debate during the second round. Member States can benefit from this as they see fit. My overview is to catalyze, not circumscribe. The positions and proposals, as expressed by Member States themselves in speech or in writing, are still leading. I do want to point out, though, that my letters laid out said positions and proposals in a more detailed fashion and that these letters form an integral part of the overview.

6. While 62/557 will thus continue to be my lodestar, as always I will also be guided by the UN Charter, the World Summit Outcome document, the relevant UN rules and procedures, legal advice and past practice. The supreme authority and logic of the Charter has inspired the exact implementation of Decision 62/557 during the second round, which should not repeat the first. Over the course of the two remaining exchanges, we will examine the five key issues as the Charter puts them together. This schedule responds to a membership-wide demand for more
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comprehensive discussions. In response to some concerns about this schedule I repeat: I am not out to circumscribe, but to catalyze. During each of the two meetings, Member States are free to express their views on any matter they deem relevant. For example, I can imagine that the first exchange on composition will feature some mention of the veto as well.

I can also imagine that during both exchanges, the membership will address the topic of review or challenge. After all, as we have seen over the course of this first exchange, review or challenge is highly relevant to all of the five key issues as defined in Decision 62/557 and common to a substantial mass of positions and proposals. By the end of June, after two rounds of negotiations, the five key issues will have been considered both separately and jointly. And all throughout this process, the five key issues as defined in decision 62/557 are still there – untouched, all in one piece, all important in their own right.

7. Comprehensiveness and compromise should be the keywords of this second round. In charting the path ahead, I have undertaken my responsibility to take the process forward, impartial to any of the positions but partial to progress. As I have elaborated while addressing comments and concerns both on Friday and today, I believe this is a road we can all travel down together, however bumpy in places. You know that has always been important to me. Along the road, I will continue to take your comments and concerns into account to the best of my abilities. For example, a number of delegations have asked me to indicate how many speakers supported which reform option – I am certainly willing to look into that in the future. In any case, I hope to see you all back for Exchange 2 on June 11.

Thank you.
Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform:  
Second Round, Exchange Two  

June 11, 2009

Opening Remarks

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

1. A warm welcome to the second exchange of the second round. It is as important now as it was at any stage of our Intergovernmental Negotiations to join hands. Join hands to further implement Decision 62/557. As I have stated, and so many with me, the further implementation of that decision during the second round requires comprehensiveness and compromise – two keywords.

2. First, comprehensiveness. Today’s exchange provides just that by revolving around the composition of the Security Council, comprising the key issues of size, categories of membership and regional representation. Questions like how many seats to add, what kind of seats and how to distribute them among the membership are intertwined. This exchange offers an opportunity to explore such connections, along with relevant negotiables. Ultimately, you are the referees of relevance. That is, Member States are free to express their views on any matter they deem relevant. I am simply discharging my responsibility as Chair by adding some structure and some comprehensiveness to the exchanges – all the while remaining impartial to any of the positions, but partial to progress.

3. The prime objective of progress brings me to the urgent necessity of compromise, which I have labeled the second keyword of this round. This time around, the accent has to
move from fleshing out the positions to showing flexibility. That is the only way to take this negotiation process to the next level and only you can do it. But I will do everything in my power to inspire you to undertake your responsibility to reform – my Overview counts as a prime example of that.

4. And I am not just about inspiration, but also about interaction. Member States will thus again be given the opportunity to intervene twice, so they can react to and reciprocate the flexibility shown by their peers. At the same time, Member States are urged to be concise and to limit their interventions to no longer than three minutes. As always, there will not be zero tolerance, but neither will tolerance be infinite. So let me also lead by example and conclude. Thank you.
Closing Remarks

June 11, 2009

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

1. Let me conclude by commending you all. This was another excellent exchange. In a both constructive and productive manner, Member States explored the connections between the issues. One delegation even submitted the text of a resolution. As I also stated in my Overview, without a doubt decisive progress is within reach. This is not optimism, but realism.

2. I urge you to bring the same kind of engagement and determination to the third exchange of the second round. The issues on the table deserve it. Exchange 3 was originally scheduled for June 23, but to give delegations more space and to be able to finish, we will already start the day before, on June 22. Member States can expect to receive another letter well in advance. In the meantime, I would encourage all Member States to step up their internal deliberative processes on Council reform. Don’t just ask what the negotiations can do for you, but also what you can do for the negotiations. From my part, I will carefully study all suggestions about the future of this process.

Thank you.
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Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform: Second Round, Exchange Three

June 22, 2009

Opening Remarks

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

1. This will be an auspicious week. Starting on Wednesday, the international community will gather to discuss an important issue: the global economic and financial crisis. But we begin the week today, with a different but equally significant task. Today, in accordance with 62/557, our basis and guide, we begin the final exchange of the Second Round of our intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council Reform.

2. In our last meeting, we looked at the composition of the Security Council. Today, we will look at its functions and powers, its voting, and its procedure, comprising the key issues of the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly, the question of the veto, and the working methods of the Council. This exchange will give you the opportunity to build on the first round and explore the many linkages between these issues, along with relevant negotiables.

3. Member states are, as always, free to express their views on any issue they deem relevant. However, I once again request that member states limit their interventions to three minutes, to allow everyone the opportunity to weigh in. And as has become customary, member states will be given the opportunity to intervene twice, so they can react to and reciprocate the flexibility shown by their peers.
4. Let me congratulate the membership on the energy and dedication to progress that has been in evidence in this round as in the first. In going forward with these negotiations, I urge you to continue to display the flexibility, compromise, and mutual understanding that will be a crucial part of any solution. As a well-known British writer once said, “If you can’t go around it, over it, or through it, you had better negotiate with it.” As I have said before, I am here to inspire and facilitate, as I did with my Overview; only you can take the process to the next level. On that note, I will turn the floor over to you.

Thank you.
Closing Remarks

June 23, 2009

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

1. Let me conclude by stating that this was another excellent exchange. Building on Decision 62/557, you have carefully looked at the functions and powers of the Security Council, its voting, and its procedure, comprising the key issues of the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly, the question of the veto, and the working methods of the Council. Earlier in this second round you already addressed the concept of review or challenge and the composition of the Council, comprising the key issues of size, categories of membership and regional representation.

2. Throughout the three exchanges, comprehensiveness and compromise became the keywords of this round. Inspired by my Overview, you explored the many connections between the key issues, along with relevant negotiables, and further unlocked convergence potential. Some resolution texts were even submitted.

3. Now, repetition is to be avoided. This is the sense of the house. Common sense. Hopefully, during the third round we can add concreteness as a keyword, next to compromise and comprehensiveness. Only then can we make decisive progress during this session. After having carefully listened to the interventions of all of you during this round, I continue to believe, that decisive progress is within reach. As I said earlier, this is not optimism. This is realism.

4. You can continue to count on your Chair, unflinchingly impartial to any of the positions, but partial to progress. As always, I will discharge my responsibilities with Decision
62/557 as lodestar and guided by the UN Charter, the World Summit Outcome document, the relevant UN rules and procedures, legal advice and past practice. In early July, right after a number of high-level meetings both here in New York and abroad, you can expect to receive another letter from the Chair on the further implementation of Decision 62/557 during this session.

5. Ultimately, the responsibility to implement it is yours. The responsibility to reform is yours. It’s not an easy task, but remember this. While the road to decisive progress may be laborious, as an Afghan proverb goes, there is a path to the top of even the highest mountain.

Thank you.
Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform: Third Round

September 1-3, 2009

Opening Remarks

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

1. Welcome back. Today, we once again exchange our place under the burning sun for a seat in this negotiation room – the room where we deal with the burning issue of Security Council reform. Summer has come and gone, and I hope this period of reflection has strengthened your resolve to reform the Council. In the words of the American poet Wallace Stevens: “The summer night is like a perfection of thought.” I can’t wait to hear how you have perfected your thoughts over the many past summer nights. After all, through my July 16 letter, I asked you to take advantage of the hiatus by reaching conclusions about your own positions.

2. In addition to that, I also asked you to informally reach out to others – not just to the likeminded, but also across the aisle. We certainly have come a long way since February 19, but in the times ahead we need to go the extra mile by increasingly being compromise-driven and taking into consideration the logic of the other’s position and the level of support it enjoys.

3. We can’t stall now, after starting off so well. After clearing all the procedural hurdles on day one. After seeing a genuine surge of interest, with up to two thirds of the membership actively and interactively engaged. After, inspired by the Overview, chewing over the main options and negotiables for reform.
4. Out of these, as always based on your guidance, we are for now going to zero in on two potential reform models, looking not just at all their different varieties but also at all their different pros and cons. During the meetings, Member States are of course free to express their views on any matter they deem relevant. I for one am just discharging my fundamental responsibility as Chair by slightly focusing the agenda as per your requests. It is my firm intention to help you move ahead, not go around in circles. What is more, I do so without any prejudice whatsoever to the particular solution you might arrive at in the end. I do not point my finger in any definite direction – I am simply the one who holds the gavel.

5. So, in accordance with your different requests, tomorrow will be all about the model featuring an expansion in both current categories, with the intermediate model at the center of attention come September 3. Needless to say, both models extend into all five dimensions of reform – known among Security Council reform aficionados as the five key issues.

6. Nevertheless, today we kick off this third round by explicitly putting the five of them at the forefront of our discussion. Considered one by one in the first round and more comprehensively during the second, the five key issues now feature on the agenda all at once. After this exchange, yet another opportunity to explore the interconnectedness of these issues, we will have looked at them from every possible different angle.

7. This way, we do justice to GA Decision 62/557, which will continue to be our brightly shining lodestar on the journey towards reform. Or, to be more precise, early reform, the overarching objective world leaders rallied around back in 2005. When is early, one might ask. It is never too early in a world where the number of major conflicts last year went up instead of going down. It is never too early in a world where city streets
are the new trenches and civilians the main casualties of war. It is never too early in a world where the next global emergency calling for a global response could be in foreign rather than financial affairs. The Wallace Stevens poem I quoted from at the outset bears the following title: “The house was quiet and the world was calm.” Yet the world is not calm, so this house cannot remain quiet. In these dangerous days, this house, this world organization, is called upon to pull together and pull off a long overdue reform of its peace and security organ. The challenge is to make it reflect the global realities of the 21st century, not the mid 20th century. The Security Council can become more effective, its resolutions more readily implemented, if it is widely perceived as a more representative and thus more legitimate body. Here, becoming more effective is really just jargon for saving more lives. That is why, in the words of the President of the General Assembly, a better Council cannot wait until tomorrow, if we want to have a better tomorrow.

8. As the third round gets underway, our collective efforts to boost the Council’s legitimacy and its effectiveness enter into a new phase – a decisive one. I urge you to make the most out of the little time we have left this session by being compromise driven, concrete and concise. Nobody, I presume, has forgotten about the three minute rule over the summer, although I won’t get tired of reminding delegations time and again if necessary. You have a lot of work on your hands and I am here to facilitate that work – as you have grown accustomed to, impartial to any of the positions, yet partial to progress.

Thank you.
Closing Remarks
September 3, 2009

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, dear friends,

1. Next week, it will be eight years since the day the world changed. The attacks of September 11 and their aftermath also shook this building to its very foundations. As many, friends and foes of the UN alike, have stated ever since, in this brave new world we need a brave new UN. The term United Nations already bears in it the Latin verb “nasci” – to be born. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, it has to become associated with another: “renasci” – to be reborn. This renaissance would not be complete without a new and improved Security Council, the world body’s heart muscle. Not when the number of major conflicts last year went up instead of going down. Not when city streets are the new trenches and civilians the main casualties of war. Not when the next global emergency calling for a global response could be in foreign rather than financial affairs.

2. That is why at the World Summit in 2005, our leaders entrusted us with the mission to reform the Council. But they rallied around “early reform”, not “reform whenever”. As the President of the General Assembly has concluded, it would seem safe to say, that world leaders did not mean to see another World Summit pass us by with the status quo intact. Fortunately, with the President’s leadership, this year we at long last left the antechamber of reform and walked into the negotiation room – a door opened by landmark decision 62/557.

3. There are those who say that we have failed, because after half a year of negotiations we did not reform the Council. But it is they who have failed. They have failed to see the decisive progress you achieved on the most sensitive of issues and under
the most difficult of circumstances. In the twilight of the 62nd session, the process almost collapsed under the weight of acrimony. Since then, acrimony has given way to harmony. This spring, with a careful yet courageous work plan embraced by everyone, we cleared all the procedural hurdles on day one, avoiding negotiations on the negotiations and moving straight into the substance. From that first day on, there has been a genuine surge of interest, with up to two-thirds of the membership actively and interactively engaged. After previous reports had already recorded a wide range of views, you chewed over the main options and negotiables for reform, inspired by my Overview. During the third round, you zeroed in on two of the potential models. After three rounds, the five key issues from 557 have been examined from nearly all possible different angles. And also, over three rounds, with the articulation of the positions, the board has been set – now hopefully the pieces can really start moving more towards a compromise.

4. So at this point in time we have ground to be proud. Much ground has been covered. The groundwork has been laid. The groundwork for a real give and take, for real reform. The groundwork for the realisation of the President’s vision: a United Nations where every country counts. To humbly contribute to that vision, to serve under an immensely dedicated man like Miguel d’Escoto has been a great honor. It is now my responsibility to brief him and, upon his decision, get back to you briefly on the steps ahead. I will tell him that you are united in your desire to continue the process in a smooth and solid manner – no progress should be lost, no time should be wasted. In the meantime, I understand from the Office of the President, you will receive the report of the Open-ended Working Group – it will be in the mail right after Labor Day weekend, with its final meeting scheduled for Wednesday afternoon. Over that same Labor Day weekend, I will labor diligently to finish my already announced letter about the now finished third round. But before I put pen to paper, let me use
this oral statement to sincerely thank all of you, the owners of this process. It has been a great journey so far – my Egyptian friend compared it to an airplane ride. An accurate comparison in my view. An airplane is a fast means of transportation – however, to avoid storms or airspace restrictions, it does not always take the fastest route, what matters is getting to the destination all in one piece. I for one can see the destination somewhere in the distance and I believe in time we will safely land this plane there – at a place called reform. That way, we will have finally accomplished the mission entrusted to us by world leaders, which, after all, was never meant to be a permanent mission.

Thank you.
Statements given at Other Meetings and Events
by H.E. Zahir Tanin, Ambassador and Permanent
Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the
United Nations, New York
Ambassador Tanin speaks to the press following a Security Council meeting on the Situation in Afghanistan
Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, allow me to express my delegation’s appreciation for organizing this Commemorative High Plenary Meeting on a topic that requires special attention from the family nations represented in this noble organization; The Future of Our Children”.

The protection of the rights of the child remains a fundamental responsibility of the human community, requiring children to be raised in a healthy environment and ensuring their physical, psychological, social, emotional, cognitive and cultural development.

This value represents a high priority in a country like Afghanistan, where the devastating consequences of three decades of war has particularly affected the most vulnerable part of our population, namely children and women. During this period, the basic rights of Afghan Children have been undermined due to the vicious cycle of violence, poverty and lack of access to education and health facilities.

Since the end of 2001, despite facing many challenges in our state-building efforts, we have achieved substantial progress in addressing the rights of our children. We have ratified the
Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols in 2002 and included dispositions in our domestic law aimed to protect the rights of children. Improving the lives of our citizens and providing our children with a better and brighter future stands high among our policy objectives. We remain committed to address the plight of our children by implementing our Millennium Development Goals through the Afghanistan Compact and our interim National Development Strategy (I-ANDS).

Mr. President,

During the Special Session of the General Assembly on Children in 2002 it was recognized that building a World Fit for Children would be a major step in fulfilling the commitments of the Millennium Summit. The four major goals of the Plan of Action strongly reinforce the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs, all of which address and affect the rights of children. In the effort to achieve this noble task, we have submitted our first progress report covering the period 2002 - 2006. In this regard, we count on sustained financial assistance from our international partners to implement our national development strategy. We remain hopeful that a greater share of such assistance will be provided on the basis of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

Mr. President,

Allow me to briefly refer to some achievements in protecting and promoting the rights of our children and improving their socio-economic conditions.

In the area of education, close to 6 million children have returned to schools - 35% of which are girls. More than 3,500 schools have been built and new curriculum and textbooks have
been developed for primary education. In addition, the number of teachers has increased seven-fold.

These figures mirror achievements made in the area of health. Our Ministry of Health continues to work diligently to implement nation-wide programs to improve the lives of mothers and children. The rate of infant and maternal mortality has been reduced by 85,000 and 40,000 annually. In just September and October, more than one hundred thousand previously un-immunized children were vaccinated against Polio in southern Afghanistan. Distribution of the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS), has improved coverage of basic health services from 9% in 2003 to 81% of the population this year. These include assistance in the form of maternal and new born health, child health and immunization, public nutrition, communicable disease control of tuberculosis, malaria and HIV/AIDS.

Mr. President,

Our Government is strongly committed to address child protection issues. Our National Strategy on children that lays out specific activities to prevent violence and exploitation of children has been launched in May 2006. Our nation-wide program to demobilize child soldiers was completed in 2006. A total number of 7,444 under age soldiers between the ages of 13-18 were demobilized throughout the process. In order to facilitate social integration of those children, local demobilisation and reintegration committees have been established all over the country. Important steps towards preventing child trafficking have taken place. We have established a special task force to protect children in bordering provinces from falling into hands of traffickers. As a result, since 2002, 429 cases of child trafficking have been discovered out of which 317 children have been rescued from traffickers.
We are thankful to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) for making our achievements possible and rendering services during the most difficult of conditions.

Mr. President,

The prevention of the HIV/AIDS epidemic is among our priorities. However effective policies to combat HIV/AIDS in Afghanistan are hampered by the lack of reliable data on the prevalence of, incidence and ways of transmission. Nevertheless, Afghanistan created its National AIDS Control Program (NACP) in 2004 to collect systematic data on the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. We are also taking every measure possible to avert a full epidemic through awareness campaigns.

Mr. President,

Despite progress made, the Afghan Children continue to face insurmountable challenges. Children remain the prime victim of terrorism in Afghanistan. Just last month, a terrorist attack in northern Baghlan province led to the death of more than fifty children. Close to 90 children were left wounded. The horrific incident was among the latest of numerous attacks illustrating the effects of terrorism and insecurity on the lives of our children. As part of their intimidation campaign, the Taliban and Al-Qaeda have resorted to new and brutal tactics such as executing young children for teaching English and being in possession of foreign currency. Terrorists are also attacking students and burning schools. Just between August 2006 and July 2007, at least 133 incidents of schools attacks took place, mainly in the southern provinces. As a result, 384 of the 721 schools in provinces of Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan and Zabul are currently closed. Other tactics used by terrorists include deliberate targeting of female teachers and students, as well as use of children as suicide bombers.
Many present here today may recall the incident in which a six year old boy from Ghazni province was deceived by terrorists to wear a vest laden with explosives. Refusing to conduct the attack, the boy confessed to authorities he was told that by pressing the button, flowers would spring out of the vest. The use of children as a tool by terrorists is a new phenomenon that must be prevented.

Mr. President,

Despite the significant increase in enrollment of children in schools, a great number of children, particularly those living in rural areas, continue to face difficulty in accessing educational institutions. To date, approximately 1.2 million primary school age girls remain at home, owing to various factors, including dire socio-economic conditions and insecurity in some areas. We call on our international partners to support the implementation of our National Strategic Plan for Education, whose objectives also include the development of community based schools that are closer to home.

Challenges facing children are not confined to education alone. Recent estimates indicate that the rates of child and maternal mortality in Afghanistan remain among the highest in the world. Close to 900 children under the age of 5 die daily. More than 60 women die every day from pregnancy-related complications. Reversing this trend will require continued international assistance to enhance the capacity of our health centers in all parts of the country. In this regard, we stress the importance of development of accessible family planning services and emergency obstetric care which will help reduce the number of deaths.
Mr. President,

Poverty remains the biggest obstacle in Afghanistan in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the Action Plan of a World Fit for Children. We would like to stress the need for full partnership and expanded cooperation with the international community in our mutual commitment to attain the MDGs and create an “Afghanistan fit for Children”. In that regard, we highlight the need for a considerable increase in the level of Official Development Assistance (ODA) for least developed countries, particularly countries emerging from conflict, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Thank you Mr. President.
Afghanistan on the World Stage

Opening of the Art Exhibition on Afghanistan at the United Nations

April 7, 2008

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome all of you to this special event. I am delighted at the presence of the President of the General Assembly. It is also a pleasure to see so many colleagues and members of the Afghan community in New York.

Seven years ago in March 2001, the world learned of the destruction of the almost 2000 year old Buddha statues in Afghanistan. The Taliban’s shameful act was not only a blatant attack against Afghanistan’s rich history, but humanity as a whole. It received a wide international condemnation. Yet, the demolition of Statues is but one example of the cultural genocide aimed at the obliteration of Afghanistan’s historical memory and its cultural heritage. Afghanistan’s Kabul museum and national gallery were once home to precious sculptures, paintings, coins, gold, potteries, and other artwork depicting the rich history of Afghanistan and the region. During the armed-conflict, a great majority of these precious artifacts were looted and destroyed. Many were smuggled to foreign countries.

Nevertheless, seven years since opening a new chapter in our modern history, steady progress continues towards the restoration and revival of Afghanistan’s national heritage. In March 2002, the Government of Afghanistan partnered with the UNESCO to begin rehabilitation of Afghanistan’s National Museum in Kabul. Since then, a considerable number of
historical artifacts have found their way home and been restored to the national museum.

Tonight’s event is a manifestation of our commitment to our cultural heritage. We have gathered to honor the work of one of our well-known artists, Professor Amanullah Haidarzad. During his illustrious career, Professor Haidarzad has produced various sculptures, paintings, coins, and medals portraying Afghanistan’s rich identity, history and culture. As such, he has played an important role in promoting Afghanistan’s cultural heritage. His work has been recognized by a diverse audience of intellectuals and applauded in various forums and international gatherings.

As you will see, moments from now, his artwork not only provides an adequate illustration of Afghanistan’s cultural image, but also contains an international dimension, reflecting the beauty of three distinct traditions of art: Traditional West, Avant-Garde and Traditional Islamic. In each category, he has demonstrated a unique skill in mastering both technique and artistic sensibility.

Professor Haidarzad has dedicated himself to rebuilding the arts and culture of Afghanistan. His service to his country dates back to 1966 when he played an instrumental role in the founding of the Faculty of Fine Arts at Kabul University. Since 2001, he has traveled to Afghanistan on numerous occasions to propose the rebuilding of Buddha statues and conduct a survey for establishing a Cultural Center in Kabul University. In recognition of his sense of patriotism and potential, Prof. Haidarzad was appointed as Senior Adviser on Cultural Affairs by His Excellency President Karzai.
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over two-decades, images of violence, suffering, agonies and destruction, aired by the international media, has shaped a depressing perception about Afghanistan. Tonight’s exhibition gives testimony to the beginning of a new outlook in our history; one characterized by symbols of hope, peace and progress.

Art and culture unify people and connect humanity, irrespective of religious, racial and cultural differences. Together, let us invest greater in art and culture as they contribute to peace and harmony world-wide.

Before declaring this exhibition open I would like to give the floor to Professor Haiderzad to share his thoughts on his work with us.
Mr. President,

I want to begin by expressing Afghanistan’s sincere condolences to China and Myanmar on the terrible natural disasters that affected both countries and resulted in death of thousands of people including children.

Mr. President,

Since the beginning of the reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan in 2002, the Government of Afghanistan and UNICEF have succeeded to develop a strong partnership aimed to uphold the rights of Afghan children and women. Today, I would like to express my gratitude to UNICEF for its continuous support and constructive activities in Afghanistan in the field of health, education and gender equality, water and environmental sanitation programme as well as child protection.

Mr. President,

I would like to thank Mr. Toole for his very comprehensive presentation of the country programme for Afghanistan. Afghanistan welcomes the proposed one year extension of the Country Programme aimed to align programme cycles supported by the United Nations with the Afghanistan National Development Strategy Framework. This positive initiative will accelerate the implementation of our common vision which is to create in Afghanistan an environment where the rights of
children and women to development, protection and participation are realized.

We are thankful to UNICEF for the allocation of $30,168,000 from regular resources and $60,884,000 in other sources to the country programme for Afghanistan for the year 2009 and we are looking forward to have an increase in the budget allocated for the child protection as the protection of children against violence, exploitation and abuse is a high priority in Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

Afghanistan is firmly committed to improving the situation of children and women and has achieved remarkable progress in this area as highlighted in the country programme. We are seeing more children going to school as well as an improvement of maternal health care services, and there are projects around the country to tackle the huge rates of female illiteracy. We’ve been effective in reducing child and maternal mortality rates and polio has significantly declined thanks to the cooperation of UNICEF.

Nevertheless we have a long way to go and formidable challenges remain in all areas. Insecurity caused by the resurgence of terrorist activities by the Taliban and Al-Qaida-especially in the southern and eastern parts of the country - remains the major obstacle in improving the lives of Afghan children and women. The terrorists continue to burn schools, hospitals, and threaten teachers and children from attending school. Children remain the prime victim of this intimidation campaign as it affects school attendance and girl’s enrollment in particular.
Mr. President,

The global food crisis has also affected the lives of our population and especially our children. We welcome the Executive Director’s attention on this issue and we encourage UNICEF to address the looming food price crisis through strengthening emergency preparedness particularly school feeding.

Mr. President,

In order to translate our political will into coherent actions at a country level, we need from our development partners to coordinate their efforts and create a synergy aiming to improve the impact of aid in the country. I would particularly like to emphasize on the need for the UN development entities operating in Afghanistan to consolidate their activities in order to support our efforts to reach the Millennium Developments Goals and other Internationally Agreed Development Goals.

Thank you for your attention.
Afghanistan on the World Stage

Celebration of the 1150th Anniversary of the Birth of Abu Abdullah Rudaki

June 18, 2008

Secretary General Ban Ki-moon,
Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, we are gathered with members of friend-nations who share a common language, culture, religion and history to commemorate the 1150th anniversary of Abu Abdullah Rudaki’s birth. Rudaki is one of the founders of the rich classical literature which belongs to Afghanistan, Iran, and Tajikistan as well the millions who speak the same language throughout the world. I would like to personally welcome Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. My welcome extends to Permanent Representatives, UN delegates and dignitaries, as well as the guests and friends of the Afghan, Iranian and Tajik community in the New York area. Abu Abdullah Rudaki was a master of words, a gifted poet, mellifluous voice, a talented musician - and a great cultural icon.

It is a tribute to the richness of our literature and culture that we are able to gather here today like we did last year, to mark the 800th anniversary of another great icon, Moulana Rumi Balkhi, and we are grateful to once again join in the spirit of our shared cultural heritage. Rudaki was born in Transoxiana or today’s Tajikistan, and attended madrassas in the historic city of Samarqand where he began to write poetry when he was only eight years old. As was the tradition at the time, Rudaki wrote, read and sang lyrical and unparalleled poetry enjoyed by the
common people. Even today, we are left enchanted by his beautiful masterpieces. He was indeed in a class of his own.

Abu Abdullah Rudaki was the son of a region blessed by a flourishing civilisation founded by the Samanid Dynasty. During this epoch, our land underwent a dramatic change where science, literature and culture were transformed and works of great intellectuals emerged. The center of this transformation, the city of Bukhara, the capital of the Samanids, had a special role as the heart of Sufi Islam and the entire Islamic world, and therefore at the time, of the world itself. At the time, literary, scientific and cultural learning helped to create a Renaissance that swept the region.

It was a time that great intellectuals such as: Abu Muayid Balkhi, Abu Reyhan Biruni, Abu Nasr Farabi, Muhammad Zekriya Razi, Imam al-Bukhari, and Ibn Sina, or as we know him in English, Avicenna, and others who had a lasting impact on our tradition of learning and knowledge thrived. In speaking of the greatness of Bukhara, Avicenna remarked that the library of Bukhara was the greatest he had ever seen.

Rudaki was invited to the Samanid Court by the famous reformer king Nasr Ibn Ahmad Samani. Rudaki was blessed by the prosperity and intellectual richness of the time, and the legacy of his works is a blessing to us today. Rudaki had another crucial role in founding the traditions of our literature; he was one of the first prominent poets to begin composing his works in Persian Dari language, which replaced Arabic as the dominant language of administration, learning and writing.

A world without words is almost unimaginable and the words of great poets such as Rudaki reveal an inherent connection between our peoples. His poetry and music serve as reminders of our common past and the shared history, language, religion and culture of Afghanistan, Iran and Tajikistan. Rudaki lost his
sight in his later years but Rudaki never lost sight of his love of people, art, nature and solidarity - some of the common themes threaded together in the fabric of his vibrant imagination.

Today’s celebration is a celebration of the Master of Words we know as Abu Abdullah Rudaki, but it is also a reminder of the unbroken culture interconnectedness between Afghans, Iranians and Tajiks. Rudaki conveyed a message of peace, tolerance and solidarity and he belongs to all of us.
Mr. President,

Let me begin by congratulating H.E. Deputy Foreign Minister, Nurlan Danenov, for his presentation and for sharing Kazakhstan’s experiences and progress made towards the implementation of its national development strategy with a view to achieving the MDGs. This presentation is especially interesting and opportune for Afghanistan which has launched its own National Development Strategy (ANDS) during the recent Paris Conference of June 12.

Mr. President,

We are pleased that Kazakhstan has developed a national development strategy: ”Kazakhstan-2030. Prosperity, security and improved living standards for all Kazaks” This strategy identifies its development priorities and outlines sectoral programmes to achieve them. We are impressed by the progress made by Kazakhstan since the adoption of their National Development Strategy towards eradicating poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education as well as in the field of sustainable development.

Through its National Development Strategy, Kazakhstan nurtured a favorable environment for investment, stimulating high rates of economic growth which have increased the income of the citizens of Kazakhstan 6.5 times and enabled the
government to meet MDG1. Kazakhstan is transforming these economic resources into social development and equitable advancement of its human potential. Kazakhstan has achieved MDG2 by providing primary education for all children, and we welcome its efforts in further guaranteeing free secondary education in State schools and moving towards more sustainable development.

Mr. President,

We would like to draw your attention on the importance of regional cooperation, especially among landlocked countries, as a core strategy for achieving the MDGs. Afghanistan and Kazakhstan are both landlocked countries facing common challenges in terms of trade opportunities. In our shared aim to achieve the MDGs, the need for an integrated and coherent approach to development must include regional initiatives such as development of transport infrastructure, regional energy cooperation, trade facilitation and border cooperation. These initiatives will provide wider development options through greater access to resources and markets, address shared problems that stretch across borders and take advantage of opportunities for sharing knowledge.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Kazakhstan for its involvement in infrastructure, energy, trade, investment and humanitarian projects in Afghanistan, specifically the construction of the Termez - Kabul railroad that would contribute to excellent trade opportunities in the region.

Afghanistan occupies a key strategic location linking Central Asia with South Asia, providing China and the Far East with a direct trade route with the Middle East and Europe. The Regional Economic Cooperation Conference held in Delhi in 2006 recognized the strategically important location of
Afghanistan as playing an eminent vital role to the growth prospects of the region as well as increased investment and trade opportunities. It has also acknowledge the importance of a strategy of development specifically for Afghanistan based on cooperation with its neighbors, as a tool to reduce poverty and achieving the MDGs in the whole region. The Delhi Conference further noted the crucial role of Afghanistan in providing a focal point for facilitating greater economic cooperation and integration.

The Afghan Government’s vision is to contribute to regional stability and prosperity and facilitate the enabling conditions for Afghanistan to translate its historic role of land bridge between global and regional actors which will serve mutual interests and benefit from increased trade and export opportunities and create a “win-win” situation for all.

Our free market oriented economy and non-protectionist policy environment for global and regional partners contribute to create an environment favorable for attracting investment and empowering Afghanistan to become an integral part of the regional economy. Afghanistan aims to continue to pursue dialogue with neighboring states to enhance and sustain its integration into the regional economy and markets.

Mr. President,

Kazakhstan has progressed significantly and we hope to use their lesson learned in development to achieve our development goals. Kazakhstan sets up a role model for LLDCs on how the national development strategy empowered by prudent and efficient use of natural resources could make great impact on the lives of ordinary citizens.

Thank you for your attention.
Hon. Sam Kutesa, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uganda,
Hon. OIC SG,
Dear Colleagues,

Mr. Chairman, my delegation and I congratulate you on your assumption of the Chairmanship of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. I would like to seize this opportunity to extend my gratitude to the Permanent Mission of Uganda as well as the OIC Secretariat for their able leadership with regard to the Final Communiqué of the Annual Coordination Meeting (ACM) of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers.

The Government of Afghanistan welcomes and supports the adoption of the amended Charter of the Organization of the Islamic Conference by the 11th Summit in Dakar, in March of this year and is fully committed to fulfilling its obligations to implement the OIC Ten-Year Plan of Action.

As a founding member of the OIC, Afghanistan has always attached great importance to the Organization of the Islamic Conference. We have always enjoyed tremendous support from the organization and its members. In this regard, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to the people and governments of our fellow Muslim nations that have contributed to the reconstruction of Afghanistan, whether directly or through the OIC Trust Fund for the Assistance of the Afghan people.
Mr. Chairman,

We come together to address the most challenging issues we face today. Difficult economic conditions, food and energy crises, poverty, terrorism, and conflict and Islamophobia threaten the short and long term stability of the Muslim world perhaps even more than other parts of the world. My delegation is confident that our organization, as the largest international organization after the United Nations, can play a significant role in identifying ways and means of mobilizing our efforts to deal with all these challenges.

In order to deal with global food crisis effectively, in particular within Islamic countries, the OIC should unite its efforts and coordinate its actions to address the issue. By pooling our efforts across the Muslim world, we will be able to arrive at a sustainable solution that incorporates a short-term solution while developing a long-term vision of food security. The Government of Afghanistan expresses its solidarity with the Islamic peoples in addressing their political, economic and social problems. Today’s globalized world requires our unity and collective and complementary endeavors to tackle the complex issues we face.

Mr. Chairman,

Terrorism and extremism continue to be a threat to peace, security and progress in Afghanistan as well as the region. Terrorists attack and commit crimes against all sectors of Afghan society: women, children, clergies, aid workers, government employees, tribal and political leaders and ordinary innocent people. Two thirds of the victims of all suicide bombings are civilians. The Taliban and Al-Qaeda act as a force of butchery and destruction: burning new schools and clinics, and destroying what we build. It is a painful truth that the brutality is no longer limited to the Afghan people, as it has
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been in the past, but also against our Muslim brothers in Pakistan.

Terrorists and extremist groups are trying to give their skewed political aspirations a religious justification. This justification is one of the greatest lies of our time, defaming the name of our people and our religion, and we cannot and should not remain silent. The OIC as an organization that embodies the collective will of all Islamic countries has a significant role and a great responsibility to embark on a strong campaign against those who try to justify their hideous actions against Muslim people in the name of Islam.

While international terrorism is the major threat to international peace and security, as well as to fundamental freedoms such as human rights, democracy, prosperity and territorial integrity in each country, we Muslims have the joint responsibility to redouble our efforts on all dimensions of the war against terrorism, to go after terrorists and their sources of training, inspiration and financing.

Mr. Chairman,

Terrorist campaign and continuing brutality, by Al-Qaeda and the Taliban and like-minded groups, have led a misguided few to further stereotypes and fears of Islam or Muslims Islamophobia, discrimination against Muslims and defamation of Islam, as we are witnessing in some parts of the world, has become an issue of serious concern for all of us. My delegation condemns the growing trend of Islamophobia, and we express our support for the organization’s observatory on Islamophobia.

Our efforts at combating Islamophobia will be half-hearted if they consist solely of denouncing false representations of Islam. The other half of our work must be to present the real image of Islam to the world. We must show the world Islam is indeed a
religion of peace, love, justice, and tolerance and also draw a line between genuine Islam and the claim of those terrorist groups which attempt to project their deeds and actions as Islamic. At the same time it is important to help all efforts that facilitate harmony and dialogue among different cultures and religions. In this regard, Afghanistan strongly supports the Alliance of Civilizations initiative which is co-sponsored by Turkey and Spain under the aegis of the UN Secretary-General.

Mr. Chairman,

As President Karzai said in his statement at the GA “We deeply sympathize with our Palestinian brothers and sisters on their struggle and suffering.” The Afghan people have long recognized the deep suffering of the Palestinian people, and we fully support the peace process negotiations between the two sides and the full implementation of the Road Map towards ending the occupation of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and we believe in the necessity of realizing the two-state solution for peace in accordance with relevant U.N. resolutions.

Mr. Chairman,

The people of Afghanistan and our Iraqi brothers and sisters are all too familiar with the pains and challenges of national reconstruction while face the scourge of international terrorism. We are glad to see and welcome the recent improvements in the security situation in Iraq, and wish them continued success in their endeavors.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation supports the inalienable rights of Member States to develop nuclear energy for peaceful uses as enshrined in the NPT and the Statute of the IAEA and hopes for the urgent and
peaceful solution to the discussions regarding the peaceful and scientific nuclear activity of our brotherly country of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Chairman,

Afghanistan remains convinced of the central role of the United Nations as the only universal multilateral organization, and strongly and the OIC as the largest Islamic organization in the world, will contribute to promotion of international peace, security and development.

Finally, as the end of Ramadan and Eid are just a few days away, I would like to take this opportunity to wish all of you continued success and in the coming months.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.
Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Regretfully, H.E. Dr. Rangeen Dadfar Spanta, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, was not able to participate to our meeting today as he had to accompany our President back to Afghanistan. However, on his behalf, I wish to begin by extending to you our appreciation for convening today’s meeting.

Mr. Chairman,

Since its creation SAARC has truly fulfilled its core mandate and provided great services to our people by connecting them through trade and transit facilitation, sharing of know-how as well as transfer of technology. I deeply believe that one of the greatest accomplishments of our organization has been to open new opportunities for least developed member countries to receive capacity building assistance from the members possessing advanced technologies and large pool of highly educated and skilled workforce.

Nevertheless, despite our joint efforts to promote growth and development in our region as well as improving the welfare of our people, our countries are still facing multiple challenges ranging from poverty and hunger to significant gap between the rich and the poor. This reality contradicts the objectives of our organization and requires from us to adopt innovative policies that will benefit the majority of our people particularly the
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vulnerable one, and to consider practical and rapid ways of its implementation.

Mr. Chairman,

In order to further regional cooperation in the interest of prosperity of our people and identify the most suitable response to address common challenges, we need to adopt an integrated and coordinated operational approach that will contribute to evolve our organization from a conceptual to an operational level. This strategy needs to combine the following elements:

- Providing special attention for the adoption of national plans, projects and activities that in addition of ensuring our national interest will benefit our region as well.

- Mobilizing technical resources including our experts that will assess bottlenecks and ways to implement projects.

- Establishing a monitoring framework that will supervise the implementation of our decisions by measuring how much we have improved the lives and welfare of our people, and design our plans accordingly.

- Mobilizing further financial resources and financing of national and regional projects through SAARC development fund, particularly to member states in need of immediate assistance.

Mr. Chairman,

Cooperation in the area of transfer of energy is an important component of successful regional cooperation that ensures a “win-win” situation. In this regard, I would like to underline the crucial importance of two regional projects for the security and prosperity of our people, they are:
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- CASA 1000 aimed to transfer 1300 MGW electricity energy from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to Afghanistan and Pakistan, and

- TAPI - the pipeline aimed to transfer natural gas from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan and India.

I would like to take this opportunity to stress on the need of our coherent efforts and to encourage the international financial institutions such as ADB and WB to provide the needed funds for the successful implementation of these projects to promote growth and development in our region.

Mr. Chairman,

The realization of SAARC decisions and successful regional cooperation can be achieved only through strong political will. Without political will and determination our noble ideas will remain merely as beautiful dreams.

Today, we have to acknowledge that certain bilateral issues exist that are impeding speedy progress and slow down the implementation of our decisions. I would like to underline the need to overcome such differences and make regional cooperation a base for mutual benefit and sincerity that will have a win-win outcome to all parties and everyone will benefit from it.

Before concluding, let me thanks Secretary General for his comprehensive report. I would like to extend my government support and endorse recommendations he seeking the Council of Ministers approval for and in the SG I would like to make the following announcements:

1 - We are considering hosting one or two SAARC gathering during 2009. We will inform member countries on the details through diplomatic channels.
2 - We have begun ratification of the SAARC various instrument. Our cabinet approved the SAARC Charter and the SAARC Food Bank Agreement and submitted them to the parliament for approval. The process of other SAARC documents is well under way.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.
H.E President of the General Assembly,
Honourable Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to address the high-level Meeting of the General Assembly devoted to the Mid-Term Review of the Almaty Programme of Action. I would like to convey my thanks to H.E. Mr. Miguel d’Escoto Brockmann, President of the General Assembly, for his efforts to ensure the continuing support of the international community for the land locked countries, commend H.E. Secretary General H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his strong leadership and focus towards implementation of the Programme and express my appreciation to the High Representative Cheik Diarra and his office for the excellent preparatory work for this meeting.

Since the adoption of the Programme of Action five years ago, many landlocked and transit countries, with the help of their development partners, have achieved certain progress towards realisations of this document. However, due to a variety of impediments facing the landlocked countries, many of them, including Afghanistan, have not been able to use trade as an effective instrument to achieve their development goals.

Among the many areas of progress in Afghanistan, the Government of Afghanistan has:

1. Expanded the role of the private sector in investing in the transport and transit infrastructure. We have established the Afghan National Trade and Transit Facilitation Committee. In
this Committee, public and private representatives deliberate on major trade, transit and transport policies and procedures and together decide on a course of action;

2. Simplified and standardized the documents and forms used at border transactions;

3. Taken steps towards modernisation of border crossings by applying automation, purchasing of modern equipment and construction of new facilities;

4. Conducted surveys in 2007 and 2008 with the assistance of UNCTAD to identify transit challenges at the boarders and in cross-border control zones and adopted procedures to address them;

5. Begun negotiation with neighboring countries to address the shared challenges that increase the cost of goods and services to the detriment of traders and consumers. As a result we resolved our long-standing problem with Pakistan of transit/trans-shipment of Afghan fresh products through the Wagah border to India;

In the Almaty priority area of infrastructure development and maintenance, Afghanistan is:

1. Building new roads. During the past seven years, Afghanistan repaired and/or built nearly 7,000 kilometers of existing and new roads, including the ring road and secondary roads. By 2010 we hope to complete the national ring road and connect it to our neighbors in the North, South, West and East;

2. Building new railroads. As part of the Copper Mine Contract with a Chinese Consortium, a railway system that connects Central Asia to South Asia through Afghanistan is planned. Afghanistan is also working on joining the Trans Asia
Railway. In addition, the 7th Ministerial Meeting on Transport and Communication of the ECO confirms that the Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad railway will pass through Afghanistan;

3. Improving our air infrastructure. In the last few years, three private passenger and two Afghan air cargo companies have begun operation in Afghanistan. We have also just completed the construction of the Kabul New International Terminal and the upgrading of its runway. We are also working to renovate and upgrade seven airports in other parts of the country.

4. Improving communications. Communications are repeatedly referred to as one of the big success stories of Afghanistan. In 2002, there were an estimated 38,000 landlines. Today, there are almost 6,000,000 phone subscribers in the country, which includes 4 providers and an investment of nearly $1 billion dollars. By the end of 2009, we will complete the national fiber optic line and connect it to two neighboring countries. The improvement in communication services will allow better tracking information of import and transit cargo and connectivity to the region and the world;

5. Constructing pipelines and transfer of electric energy. The agreement of transfer of natural gas from Turkmenistan to Pakistan and India through Afghanistan has been finalized. In addition, last month, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan and Pakistan agreed to establish the secretariat of the CASA 1000 project in Kabul to expedite the transfer of over 1300 MW of electric energy from the two Central Asian countries to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In the Almaty priority area of monitoring and follow-up on agreements, Afghanistan is rejoining conventions such as the TIR Customs Convention to meet standards and accomplish reform of transit and freight sectors, as well as following up
with Afghanistan’s membership in FIATA (International Federation of Freight Forwarders Association).

Despite these areas of progress, Afghanistan has been facing many challenges in meeting Almaty Programme objectives, notably with the international and regional community. First, while we appreciate the financial support of the international community towards improving our transport and transit infrastructure, a significant portion of the donor pledges has not yet been delivered. Much of this aid is also delivered without full regard for the goals of the Afghan government and the Almaty Programme.

We therefore urge the international community to increase their assistance to Afghanistan in the following Almaty priority areas:

1. Extension of our roads to complete the “missing links” regional network
2. Upgrading of our roads and improving its maintenance capabilities
3. Improving our existing ports and establishing new dry ports, to build railway system and modernize our airports.

These priority areas will enable Afghanistan to meet London Compact benchmarks and achieve the goals set forth by the Afghanistan National Development Strategy.

Second, since 2002, Afghanistan has concluded a significant number of bilateral and tri-lateral agreements with most of our neighbors. Afghanistan has joined most of the major regional organizations and will continue to work towards meeting the Almaty Program objectives on regional cooperation. Unfortunately, only a few of these treaties have been
implemented due to lack of political confidence among countries in the region and/or lack of capacity and infrastructure. In short, we have yet to reap the benefit of these agreements.

To move forward, Afghanistan recommends renewed attention on these international and regional partnerships. The Almaty Programme can only be implemented through these partnerships; this spirit is clearly stated in the Declaration. The Almaty Programme calls upon both bilateral and multilateral donors to increase finance and technical assistance to landlocked developing countries. It also contains comprehensive directions for donors and international community to assist the landlocked and transit countries. Moreover, the Programme encourages developing and developed countries to enhance cooperation on the basis of mutual interest. Any improvement in trade with Afghanistan promises great benefits to partnering countries as well.

Mr. Chairman, regional economic cooperation is becoming an integral part of the globalisation strategies of almost all neighboring countries of Afghanistan. As a result, Afghanistan now has a unique opportunity to realize its potential as a “land bridge” country between Central Asia, South Asia and the West Asian region. We are aware of our responsibilities to work with our neighbors towards policies and institutional mechanisms to translate this potential into concrete regional projects. But, we would like to encourage others to work with us with similar pace and the same spirit.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation carefully reviewed the Draft Outcome Document for the Midterm Review of the Almaty Programme of Action. This document contains important recommendations and strongly appeals to the international community and donors to
increase their level of support, particularly Official Development Assistance (ODA), to the landlocked and developing transit countries. It encourages the landlocked and developing transit countries to take a proactive approach towards bilateral and multilateral cooperation. If the recommendations remain only as words and on paper, we might not witness a qualitative change. But, if undertaken in an honest, serious, effective and constructive manner, these recommendations can improve the nature of trade and transit and fully realize the objectives of the Almaty Programme of Action.

Thank you for your attention.
Mr. President, distinguished delegates,

We thank you, Mr. President, for giving us the opportunity to speak today. We commend your decision to reconvene the 10th Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly on Illega...
areas such as schools, mosques, and hospitals have been directly targeted. We join all member states in condemning the Israeli attack on the UNRWA compound yesterday, which demonstrates a fundamental lack of regard for the international obligations that bind Israel as a member of the United Nations. We commend the extraordinary efforts and dedication of UN agencies and staff under such deplorable conditions.

The impossibility of assistance has pushed an already severe humanitarian crisis to the limit. UN agencies report that basic necessities such as food, water, and cooking gas are becoming increasingly difficult to find. The terrified population of over 40,000 internally displaced persons is not permitted to leave, unable to find refuge.

But the current casualties do not even tell the full story. The ramifications of the fighting in Gaza are far-reaching. Each additional day of violence means more desperation, and the prospects for reconciliation and peace are fading.

For all these reasons, the situation in Gaza demands our immediate dedication. Common human decency demands no less.

Mr. President,

Afghanistan stands with the Security Council in condemning all violence directed against civilians, and in calling for the instantaneous implementation of Resolution 1860 and an immediate, fully-respected ceasefire leading to the full withdrawal of Israel from the Gaza strip and a durable negotiated peace. In addition, humanitarian assistance and aid agencies must be allowed to reach those in need.
The resolution of this crisis must respect and abide by international human rights and humanitarian law. The Fourth Geneva Convention, to which Israel is a party, requires that civilians be protected during conflict, and Israel, in the position of occupying force, must respect its duties towards the civilian population of Gaza. The United Nations, in turn, must seek a solution that is in accordance to the Charter and consider the counsel and work of our own judicial entities: the International Court of Justice, the Human Rights Council, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Special Rapporteurs.

Afghanistan stands by member states in agreeing that the durable solution must be one in which two states, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace with secure and recognized borders. This is the only way to address the security concerns of all parties and allow peaceful coexistence.

Once a ceasefire is achieved, the effort to achieve a durable solution will require all of our efforts, especially the regional countries who are directly impacted by the conflict. We appreciate and commend the tireless efforts of Egypt and the League of Arab States to successfully mediate and push forward negotiations. In addition, the Palestinian Authority under President Abbas should have a central role in any process. The solution, like the problem, will need to include regional actors and international partners.

Mr. President,

We offer our full support to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and call for all parties to cooperate fully with him as he works to stop the tragedy unfolding before us. We join his call for “a unilateral declaration of ceasefire by Israel” to put an immediate end to the violence.
Today we can wait no longer; we must all act, and swiftly. Until a cease-fire is declared, there will be no end to the suffering of the people of Gaza. And once a cease-fire is declared, we must ensure that we have the political will to create a lasting, peaceful two-state solution.

I thank you, Mr. President.

March 5, 2009

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honor for Afghanistan to host this discussion in collaboration with UNIFEM and with the United States, and we welcome you all. I would like thank Joanne Sandler, Deputy Executive Director of UNIFEM, for being here today and for her efforts on behalf of women everywhere. I also want to convey my respect and gratitude for the presence and inspirational statement of H.E. Ambassador of the US to the UN, Dr. Susan Rice. The US has been a great friend to Afghanistan, and to Afghan women, and we are grateful to Ambassador Rice for being able to be here today. We are also humbled to be in the presence of guests who have traveled here from Afghanistan to share their personal experiences. Ms. Suraya Pakzad, Ms. Wazhma Frogh and Ms. Najia Zewari, we look forward to learning from you today.

When I was in my twenties, I studied at Kabul University. At that point, Kabul was known as “the Paris of the East”, a place where the best traditions of East and West merged. At that point, Afghanistan was a peaceful, tolerant country, where ambitious young people were encouraged to pursue a full education. At that point, women studied alongside men. There were dozens of women in all of my classes. My wife was one of these women, and she used her education to become a lecturer at Kabul Medical University and then the medical director of the main maternity hospital in Kabul.

But just a few decades later, this reality of my twenties has been threatened.
War and violence has unsettled the dust of intolerance and ignorance. The Afghanistan that finally emerged in 2001 still struggles to regain what was lost. The legislative framework is there, and the political will is there, but the recent increase in violence and insecurity has meant women are, as always, the first victims. More and more women who study, work, or attempt to be a part of social activities are receiving death threats. We were all witness to the stunning ferocity of the acid attacks on young girls last fall. Without a doubt, there are forces in Afghanistan that aim to again usurp the legitimate rights of Afghan women by creating a climate of terror and fear.

As we fight those forces, the Government of Afghanistan is committed to its responsibilities towards its citizens. We have a broad mandate: women must not only be safe from violence, they must also be free from any atmosphere of intimidation and fear. Women must not only secure participation in the political process, they must also be able to forward social and economic development.

But today we will not be daunted by the scale of the efforts ahead of us. Because we are deeply motivated by the following truths:

First, our history has shown that before the war and before the Taliban, women’s rights were recognized by Afghan society. The modernisation of our country did not begin in 2001. It began in the 1900s. In the early 1920s, Queen Soraya became the first Muslim royal to appear publicly without the veil. The first girl’s schools also appeared and women began to seek higher education in Afghanistan and abroad. In the next decades thousands of women worked as professors, lawyers, medical doctors. By the 1960s, women had acquired the constitutionally protected right to vote. Many became appointed as cabinet members and elected to Parliament. Success has been in our past; it can again be in our future.
Second, we recognize the global nature of the struggle for women. As is true in much of the developing world, including Asia, Africa and the Muslim world, there are two Afghanistan’s: one is modern and urban, the other rural and traditional. The challenge of modernizing the countryside is one that not only Afghanistan faces. That is why the work we do in Afghanistan is so important: if we succeed, we can offer hope for other countries working on the same challenge.

Third, we recognize that bridging these two worlds will take time. While occurring first in the cities, modernisation requires patience and dedication to expand into the countryside. It may take up to a few generations to accomplish lasting change in social and cultural life.

These three truths: our history, the global nature of this struggle for women, and the time required to effect lasting change - form our motivation to reject inaction, inaction couched in excuses of cultural relativism, or “pragmatism.” These excuses strengthen an immoral, Taliban and fundamentalist attempt to convince the world that Afghanistan will never accept “freedom” because of cultural reasons.

These excuses are false because the Taliban or fundamentalism does not represent any real culture of Afghanistan. The Taliban came to power only as a product of war and destruction. To the Taliban and their ideological brethren, trained and indoctrinated in madrassas outside of Afghanistan, women must be controlled and suppressed. This abuse does not represent our country, our religion, our culture. Talibanisation is exactly the opposite — it is an anti-culture, an anti-religion. Talibanisation is Taliban-vandalism, Taliban-barbarism.

The Government of Afghanistan recognizes that the ultimate responsibility for the rights of our citizens lies in our own hands. We will do our own work. But we ask for international
support in our efforts because there is no such thing as a “local” threat against women. Talibanisation, whether in Swat or Waziristan, is a serious threat to the universal attempt to improve the situation of women. It is not a local threat limited to physical boundaries.

We also ask for your support to improve the situation of women because we have seen how much we can do together. The UN, the US, the EU and other countries have been invaluable in the strengthening and stabilization of Afghanistan. With your support, we formed a new government in Bonn. With your support, we held elections in which millions of women were able to express their political will. With your support, 81% of the country now has access to basic health care. With your support, millions of girls have returned to school.

There are several opportunities ahead for us to continue to work together. First, in helping the Government of Afghanistan with security, we are taking an important first step to ensure rights for women. Insecurity is the first threat to Afghan women. Second, we have an important opportunity with the upcoming elections. The constitution of Afghanistan contains guarantees for women representation; thus these elections strengthen women’s participation in the state-building of Afghanistan. Third, the fulfillment of the Paris Conference pledges and a sustained commitment with the Government of Afghanistan to support the Afghan National Development Strategy will work for the economic empowerment of women.

As we gather here, today I remember another Afghanistan, the Afghanistan where I studied and worked. We can find this Afghanistan again with our dedication. Suraya Pakzad, Wazhma Frogh, Najia Zewari have come to tell us their stories and to bring the struggles of millions of Afghan women to the light of reality. They will be the powerful reminder to the importance of our task.
The Government of Afghanistan is fully committed to do what it can do to strengthen the position of women in the country. We hope that the international community will continue to work with us.
Keystone Address at Princeton University: President Obama’s New Strategy – what’s new, will it work?

April 20, 2009

Ambassador Vendrell,
Professor Danspeckgruber,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honor to be here today to share my thoughts with you.

President Obama once wrote of himself, “I serve as a blank screen on which people of vastly different political stripes project their own views.” The new US strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan is something of a blank screen as well. It contains components for success, and addresses the concerns of a wide variety of interests. However, it is open to interpretation, and the Administration’s level of commitment and resolve has yet to be tested. Today, I will offer an Afghan understanding of the strategy, as spelled out in policy documents and in President Obama’s own statement on March 27. I will also highlight some of the concerns that exist, and where its priorities should lie. Finally, I will outline a few areas where America cannot afford to minimize objectives.

How can we describe this new strategy?

While individual components of the American strategy are not entirely new, the strategy does combine them in a coherent, focused and fresh way. It puts increased attention on attainable short- and medium-term objectives, on a regional approach and on recognition of the centrality of the threat in Pakistan. Perhaps most importantly, it provides a clean break with the Bush years by giving President Obama ownership of the Afghan
strategy, and marks a fresh beginning with a reinvigorated commitment, reflected in the troop increases and civilian surge.

The new American strategy was created to address the confluence of two factors: first, the increasingly precarious situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and second, the need to deal with possible domestic and international fatigue towards the continuing engagement, break with Bush’s policies and put new attention on a “forgotten war.”

Despite a generally welcoming reaction from Afghanistan, there is some ongoing concern among Afghans that the American plan aims to limit objectives, distance itself from important state-building goals and create space for an early exit strategy. The strategy is driven by a sense of urgency, since the new US Administration faces fatigue in some quarters both at home and abroad, and there are defeatists world-wide who seek to paint the fight in Afghanistan as hopeless or unnecessary.

However, President Obama himself laid out the central security interest that every country has in guaranteeing a stable, moderate and better-functioning Afghanistan. It must be apparent to the Obama Administration that any immediate efforts must be accompanied by sustained commitment; one without the other will only provide short-term disappointment leading to long-term failure.

The situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan demands an urgent but long-term response. In Afghanistan, despite major achievements in the course of the last seven years, a sustainable situation is not yet on the horizon. The Taliban have taken advantage of international inattention to mount more frequent violent attacks on the international community and on Afghan civilians. Although there is not yet any serious danger of their returning to power, their role in disrupting stabilization efforts remains serious.
In Pakistan, the Taliban’s violent militarism is spreading out from sanctuaries along the border and beginning to penetrate to the heart of a once peaceful society. In addition, some in Pakistan are in denial about the severity of the threat. This threat is two-fold; first, we risk the spread of extremism and the choking of freedom in the region. Second, we risk these violent armed groups gaining increasing influence over a nuclear-armed state. It is important that Pakistan and the international community find a way to address the threat posed by the Taliban to the Pakistani state and the region.

The core objective of the new strategy is one that President Obama states clearly: “to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to either country in the future.” As the Obama Administration has acknowledged, success is significantly more complicated than just finding and capturing bin Laden. Al-Qaeda has had years to develop broad cooperative networks and stronghold in the region, and the effects of violence and extremism are now threats in their own right. To address all of this, the Obama Administration has taken a promising comprehensive view of the problem.

There are two integral components of President Obama’s core goal of defeating al-Qaeda: we must secure Afghanistan and stabilize Pakistan. The new strategy is correct in recognizing that the two countries face a common threat that needs to be addressed jointly in both countries. However, the creation of an imaginary “Af-Pak” entity for the purposes of practicality should not lead to oversimplification. Each country has its own context and its own problems. The many challenges in the region require a multifaceted and complicated response, not only by the US and the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan but also through a regional approach.

How can we secure Afghanistan?
Securing Afghanistan is a process that began in 2001, but has not yet succeeded in creating sustainable progress. Our reinvigorated efforts in Afghanistan need to be focused in three interconnected areas:

First, it is vital to halt and reverse the advances of the Taliban in Afghanistan. The Taliban cannot be allowed to regain control over the country; in addition to the reign of terror they imposed on Afghans, they also encouraged our territory to be used by al-Qaeda for the planning and execution of September 11th and other terrorist activities. Defeating the Taliban insurgency will require sustained and committed military involvement, but also political involvement through reconciliation and outreach to all Afghans, and economic development and job creation.

Second, strengthening the government, and rule of law, is essential, so that the Afghans can defend themselves and progress can be sustainable. Afghanistan is ready to take responsibility for its future. We need an improved framework where the government is empowered to fight corruption, dispense justice, provide basic services, and is held accountable to its citizens. Thus the elections planned for August will prove an important turning point; at stake are the legitimacy of national institutions and the strengthening of the democratic process.

And third, the Afghan people must be actively involved and invested in the stabilization process. Recent debates over civilian casualties and the growing perception among Afghans that their international allies are not truly committed to their security, now risk the alienation of the population. Winning the hearts and minds of people in Afghanistan would be the most important strategic asset for success.

Nevertheless, as Richard Holbrooke recently said, and I quote, “If Afghanistan had the best government on earth, a drug-free
cultural and no corruption; it would still be unstable if the situation in Pakistan remained as today. That is an undisputable fact.”

How can we stabilize Pakistan?

Although international military operations are concentrated in Afghanistan, the insurgency trains and regroups in Pakistan. Stabilizing Pakistan will thus require us to, first and foremost, eliminate these terrorist sanctuaries. This can be accomplished by a more coordinated military and non-military efforts by the US, Pakistan and Afghanistan. This requires the wholehearted cooperation of the Pakistani military, intelligence and civilian powers. The Obama strategy recognizes the critical threat posed to the Pakistani state and the region by militant elements. Pakistan must be helped to recognize this as well, and all Pakistani entities must be ready to fully dedicate themselves to the fight against these elements.

As the new US strategy indicates, in addition to these steps to be taken in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the United States will have to actively encourage the involvement of all stakeholders towards a coordinated international response. The security of Afghanistan and the stability of Pakistan depend on the two countries cooperating with each other and with the region to face a common threat. This cooperation will be impossible without the direct and pro-active role of the United States, NATO and all countries fighting terrorism in the region. In addition, the security of the wider region - including India, Iran, Central Asian states, China, Russia and other countries - is also tightly interwoven with the defeat of Al-Qaeda, the establishment of a secure Afghanistan and stable Pakistan, and the creation of a new basis for cooperation towards a collective security system.
A regional approach, such as that spelled out in the new US strategy, must change the negative and disruptive patterns of the region into positive and cooperative ones. It will then be possible for the United States to facilitate a longer-term exchange between Afghan neighbors to identify shared economic interests, to engage a new diplomatic push, and to implement confidence-building measures to address legitimate security concerns in the region.

Can the strategy succeed?

The strategy provides a solid basis for progress, but its success will depend on a number of factors. As a start, the United States and its allies must be willing to commit the resources, attention and time necessary to achieve sustainable progress. It will take time to build a strong, self-sufficient Afghan state, which is the strongest hope of defeating al-Qaeda. Many of the necessary measures in the coming years, such as the expansion of the Afghan National Army and Police, will be financially untenable without the assistance of the international community. In addition, the strategy must use the suggested benchmarks to measure progress both in the short and the longer term, and be flexible enough to adapt when targets are not reached. Thirdly, it is important that President Obama truly engage the governments and publics of NATO nations and of our region in order to coordinate the efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Most importantly, the United States must truly address and combat negative perceptions by demonstrating a sustained commitment to success in Afghanistan. Public opinion in the US, in Europe and in Afghanistan and the wider region will be key to the strategy’s success or failure. The Obama white paper alludes to the “diplomatic push” that will be necessary to create national, international and regional cooperation and to collectively address the security and development challenges in the region. This diplomatic push is a crucial part of the strategy.
We must all have a good understanding of the key role played by public perception in the success or failure of our joint work. The strategy for Afghanistan’s success must be sustainable, and this will require the trust and support of the Afghan people. Thus, the Obama administration and the international community at large must maintain and demonstrate an unambiguous commitment to Afghanistan, even in the face of some domestic and international pressures to seek a short-sighted exit. If the Taliban are given any indication that the resolve of the international community is weakening, they will assume they can out-wait the West as the Mujahidin out-lasted the Soviet Union in the 1980s. The Afghan people must be confident in the continuing support of the international community before they will be willing to trust us with their futures.

The international community and the United States already have a large commitment to Afghanistan through the Bonn process and Afghanistan and the region are becoming increasingly important on the world stage. It is the focus of the increasing global multilateralism, and it is the center of the international fight against terrorism. From Russia to India, from China to the doors of Europe, we are in the center of a region where the geopolitics of the future world are in play. In a global fight against terrorism centered in our region we will need the patience of the “Cold War” if we are determined to succeed. President Obama’s strategy opens the door for success; now we must see whether America and the international community will walk through it.
Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

My delegation would like to thank the Republic of Cuba for its leadership of Non-Aligned Movement since September 2006, and express our appreciation for their warm hospitality in this colorful city of Havana. We trust that under your leadership, this meeting will prove a success, and we will be well prepared for the upcoming Fifteen Summit in Egypt in July 2009.

Mr. Chairman,

The world has changed significantly since April 1955, when Afghanistan joined 24 of our brother countries in founding this Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Today, the Cold War has ended and there is a new global order: we no longer see through a bipolar prism, we see through a multi-polar one. And interstate war has become overshadowed by terrorist attacks by state and non-state actors.

However, NAM’s founding principles are as relevant today as they have ever been. In 1983, at our movement’s seventh summit, we described ourselves as “history’s biggest peace movement.” Today the call of peace has great resonance against the violence of terrorism and the conflicts that still plague our world. Other founding principles of NAM - respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations and the recognition of the equality of nations- are important, too, in
addressing today’s challenges of our evolving political and economic world order.

Thus our meeting today is important. Today our discussion centers on how NAM’s voice can be most effective in answering the many challenges we face.

Mr. Chairman,

My country offers a unique perspective to this discussion. As a land-locked, least-developed country that is still a victim of terrorism, Afghanistan is deeply concerned with the challenges we face with many of our Southern brothers.

We join with you in remaining committed to a just solution for the suffering of the people of Palestine, the creation of two states and a harmonious Middle East. Afghanistan once again urges the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Road Map. We are hopeful for a diplomatic resolution of the nuclear program in our brother country of the Islamic Republic of Iran. My delegation also is encouraged by the increasing stability in Iraq and we congratulate our Iraqi brothers and sisters on coming together to forge a more stable and peaceful situation.

In addition, Afghanistan sees the necessity and potential of North-South collaboration, as well as cooperation between countries in the South, because we have an active and crucial partnership with the international community and with our regional neighbors.

Perhaps most importantly, Afghanistan can offer a unique perspective because our key challenges today are also the two key challenges that all NAM countries face, and which we should work to address.
Mr. Chairman,

The two main crises today are that of terrorism and an economic depression. These crises are related.

Terrorism is Afghanistan’s primary concern and the world’s primary challenge. Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and their allies find their sanctuaries in the area bordering our country. We feel first-hand the costs of terrorism: the death of thousands of our innocent citizens, the burnings and destruction of schools, health clinics, hospitals, and roads.

But terrorism has a global reach. From New York to London, from Mumbai to Madrid, and from Kabul to Karachi, terrorist attacks have cast their shadows on both the North and South.

The second main crisis is that of the global financial collapse which exacerbates the already severe crises of energy, environment and food that particularly threaten the developing countries of the South. Already poor countries threaten to become even more mired in poverty. Afghans have felt this firsthand, as the rising wheat prices created the threat of a deadly food shortage this past winter. Thus, this financial crisis deepens the great gulf that already exists between the wealth of rich countries and the poverty of struggling nations.

My country also offers a clear example of the political implications of this divide. Poverty breeds desperation. Thus, weak states breed terrorists, organized crime and dangerous extremist elements that threaten the safety and wealth of rich countries. Again, both the North and South are affected.
Mr. Chairman,

Afghanistan is on the front lines of these two key challenges, and today I would like to underline the importance of cooperation in our work for physical and economic security.

Afghans have seen how regional and international assistance is imperative to fighting our war on terror and providing stable economic futures for our citizens. Our greatest steps forward: the constitution, the elections, combating narcotics, improvements in the Afghan National Army, infrastructure, education and health, were ones we took together with international and regional partners. International cooperation has enabled Afghanistan to establish representative political institutions, encourage free media, the paving of roads, and the building of thousands of schools, clinics, and hospitals around the country. The upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections will prove an important test of this progress. We look for the support of the international community in our commitment to ensuring credible and transparent elections. Because we have seen the fruits of cooperation with our own eyes, we stress that the global threats of terrorism and economic insecurity are challenges that can be met effectively only with cooperation: South with South, North with South, North with North.

Mr. Chairman,

Cooperation can best be accomplished through improving the operations of international and regional institutions, supporting international and regional cooperation, and increasing the effectiveness of international and regional efforts in the recipient countries.

First, to improve the operations of existing international and regional operations, Afghanistan is fully committed to NAM’s
stated goal of improving the United Nations’ responsiveness and effectiveness. In chairing the intergovernmental negotiations on UN Security Council reform on behalf of the President of the General Assembly, I have the honor to see the dedicated work our countries are making to forward comprehensive, transparent, and balanced reform. I am making every effort to ensure that the reform continues in this spirit, and am hopeful for the prospects of this reform, as well as the processes focused on the revitalisation of the GA and on system-wide coherence.

Afghanistan also fully supports the UN Secretary General’s call for a Millennium Development Goal (MDG) review conference in 2010. We commend the work of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development on the Implementation of the 2002 Monterrey Consensus last December, and look forward to the High-Level Meeting planned for June. This conference reminds us of the need to maintain aid commitments despite global uncertainty. Afghanistan also supports the conference’s agreement to strengthen ECOSOC as a principal body for promotion of international economic cooperation, coordination, policy review and policy dialogue.

Second, Afghanistan is dedicated to finding more opportunities for international and regional cooperation as well as supporting the existing cooperative institutions such as ECO and SAARC. With our immediate neighbors, Afghanistan continues to work bilaterally and trilaterally to promote stability, security and strengthen economic cooperation. We are committed to working through the trilateral mechanisms including Afghanistan-Pakistan-United States, Afghanistan-Pakistan-Turkey and Afghanistan-Pakistan-Iran. We are also looking forward to the Presidential-level meeting of the trilateral Afghanistan-Pakistan-United States contact group that is planned for May in Washington. The third regional economic cooperation conference on Afghanistan will be held in
Islamabad soon. We hope such forms of cooperation will lead to concrete actions to ending the terrorist sanctuaries and addressing the increasing activities of Al-Qaeda, the Taliban and other terrorist groups.

Third, Afghanistan encourages the ongoing international efforts to find more areas of cooperation and coordination in the recipient countries themselves. With fewer economic resources, we must be smarter about how we use these resources. Afghanistan is thankful for the Paris conference last June, the recent Hague Conference, and the SCO meeting in Moscow in March—all conferences that have emphasized exactly this need for more consistent and effective delivery of aid.

Mr. Chairman,

The struggle for economic and political security in Afghanistan also shows the potential of a world that has met these challenges. A safe and secure Afghanistan will be able to offer innumerable benefits for the region and the world. Afghanistan can, and should, play a crucial role as a land bridge and economic hub for the region, a role that has historically placed us at the centre of Eurasian trade routes. Let this potential be one example of the light we work towards today.

Mr. Chairman,

Our discussion should recognize that NAM has an important voice in today’s world. Our founding principles of NAM are just as important today; these principles must stand strong against the main challenges of terrorism and economic instability.

But we stand strongest when we stand together. Afghanistan expresses its gratitude to the commitment of all our international partners, including the NAM member countries, to aiding in our
Afghanistan on the World Stage

efforts and success in building a secure, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan. In turn, Afghanistan is fully committed to work together as a part of NAM to forward a more peaceful, secure world.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Mr. President,

I would like to begin by congratulating you on your leadership throughout your presidency of the Executive Board of UNDP and of UNFPA. Since it is the first time I’m taking the floor, I would also like to seize this opportunity to congratulate Ms Helen Clarke for her appointment as Administrator of the UNDP and for her inspiring statement on Tuesday, which has provided us with a clear vision of UNDP’s role in the coming years. I would finally like to thank Mr. Ajay Chhibber of UNDP for his insightful presentation of the UNDP Draft Country Programme for Afghanistan.

The Government of Afghanistan values highly its partnership with UNDP and is grateful to UNDP for the operational activities it has carried out in Afghanistan since 2002 in the areas of development, stabilization, state building, and governance.

One year ago, the international community renewed its political and financial support to the stabilization efforts in Afghanistan by welcoming the launching of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS). The consideration of UNDP’s new country programme for Afghanistan will help one of our most important development partners to further assist us in improving the lives of Afghans by implementing our national priorities and working towards the achievement of Afghanistan’s MDGs.
Mr. President,

The UNDP Draft Country Programme for Afghanistan for the period 2010-2013 presented to the board this year is of utmost importance for Afghanistan. Since 2002, significant progress has been achieved in Afghanistan in our path to recover from 30 years of devastating conflict, but much remains to be done. We can state today, in view of the alarming human development indicators and challenges that we are still facing, that Afghanistan is at a crucial juncture of its post-2001 development history. We need to ensure successful progression from an emergency situation to sustainable development and not regress into violence. It is therefore time for intensified action.

Allow me to stress from the beginning that we need to set up an effective framework of partnership between the Government of Afghanistan and its international partners that can align policies and funding behind the stated priorities of ANDS. This will enhance institution building and national ownership as well as further capacity development. There is also an urgent need to coordinate programmes and projects with the Government in order to focus on priorities, eliminate duplication and redundancy, and rationalize development activities to maximize cost effectiveness.

Mr. President,

The new Draft Country Programme of UNDP for Afghanistan is the product of a series of consultations held in Kabul, between the Government of Afghanistan, the donor community, UN agencies, civil society and other relevant development partners to ensure its alignment with our national development priorities as well as those contained in the UNDAF.

The four core programmatic areas identified in the Draft Country Programme accurately reflect key areas of challenge
for Afghanistan. With the upcoming elections, a deteriorating security situation, and increasing levels of poverty, Afghanistan requires support on a broad spectrum of issues. However, the Draft Country Programme document needs greater detail about planned projects, priorities, and budgeting in order to provide us with the tools to accurately monitor the effectiveness of the operational activities and their alignment with the ANDS. Donor countries can work with the government of Afghanistan and UNDP on these details. In addition, in many of these areas, particularly in peace-building and governance, it is important that the international community work in a coherent, consolidated way to support the government of Afghanistan and avoid overlap.

Mr. President,

Rising insecurity requires the international community to focus on the security sector as a central pillar in our efforts to end terrorism. However, the Afghan people differentiate between security and stability. While the military efforts undertaken by Afghan forces, the US, NATO and our other allies are becoming instruments of security, they cannot deliver stability on their own. To be stable Afghanistan must be prosperous.

Our greatest challenge in this regard remains poverty, and the UNDP is our main partner in our path to achieve MDGs and poverty eradication. Afghanistan reiterates the central importance it gives to the core development mandate of the UNDP in supporting our national efforts to address poverty. Without advances in agriculture, a mainstay of our economy, it will be difficult to achieve the target set in MDG1. We therefore encourage UNDP to focus on its core development mandate, particularly through promoting livelihoods with a focus on agriculture, rural development, food security and income generation.
Mr. President,

Afghanistan must build capacity and, with the support of UNDP, articulate development priorities, and invest in the abilities of our people, institutions, and communities to advance human development and achieve results. In this regard, we welcome the Draft Country Programme’s emphasis on national ownership.

The effective implementation of the national priorities identified in ANDS will require a strengthened partnership between the Government of Afghanistan and its development partners and a coherent and integrated United Nations system response to national priorities and needs within the framework of the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness.

We have seen what happens when aid is not harmonized. Flows of money outside the budget are undermining our efforts at creation of credible institutions, sound public finances, and stability. The solution involves not just more aid-committed with more certainty over a multi-year period—but a better quality of aid. Better quality aid, however, can only be attained through a tighter compact between the Government and donors. Alignment with the National Development Strategy is therefore an essential principle for all donors that will serve to enhance aid effectiveness and accountability.

Mr. President,

Our aims are high. In the coming years, we believe that with enough of the right kind of support, we can achieve the Millennium Development Goals. In one of the poorest and most damaged countries in the world, this challenge will test our combined will to the core, but we must succeed. The stakes have never been higher. Afghanistan can and must provide a
much-needed victory in the international wars against poverty and terror.

I thank you.
Afghanistan on the World Stage
Mr. President,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address the board on the UNFPA Draft Country Programme for Afghanistan. I would like to thank Mrs. Horibe for her very comprehensive presentation of the country programme and the information she provided us ahead of this meeting, at the UNFPA briefing organized last week regarding Afghanistan Draft Country Programme.

Since 2002, the Government of Afghanistan and UNFPA have developed a strong partnership in the area of health, gender, and population and development. Today I would like to seize this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the Country Office of UNFPA for the effectiveness of its activities and the valuable support it has provided to the Afghan Ministry of Public Health.

Mr. President,

Afghanistan remains committed more than ever to achieving the MDGs through the implementation of its national priorities as identified in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy. Improving the lives of the next generations of Afghans is the most viable path towards the stabilization of Afghanistan.

Nevertheless, seven years after the beginning of the reconstruction efforts, the situation remains precarious and challenging. The recent human development indicators are an
alarming call for intensified and coherent actions from our development partners.

Allow me to share some of the most dramatic indicators with you:

- The life expectancy in Afghanistan is 42.9 years
- Under 5 mortality rate is 191 per 1000 births
- Adult literacy is 28%
- Maternal mortality rate is down from 1,600 to 800 per 100,000 births, but still among the highest in the world
- And poverty has increased since 2001, with the level of people living under 1$ a day moving from 33 to 42%

Moreover, the deterioration of the security situation in certain parts of Afghanistan, especially in the south and south east, have impacted on the gains made in the past years in the area of health and gender and are impeding the successful achievement of MDGs in Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

The UNFPA Country Programme for Afghanistan contains comprehensive and focused programmes, priorities and adequate financial allocation for its operational activities. The key areas of action identified by the country programme are not only relevant to the challenges facing Afghanistan in achieving MDGs 3, 4 and 5 but are also in line with the national priorities identified in our National Development Strategy.

We would like to particularly express our appreciation for the adoption of a human rights-based, gender sensitive and culturally sensitive approach undertaken while formulating the programme. This we firmly believe will increase the success of implementing the programme at a sub-national level.
In this regard we would also like to stress the importance of the approach that UNFPA has taken to provide programming at a sub-national level while carrying out its development activities in Afghanistan, and we recognize the accuracy of the criteria developed by UNFPA while targeting provinces for their programmes.

Mr. President,

We would like to stress on the importance of the population and housing census project rescheduled from 2008. It is a very important tool to provide us with reliable data that would ultimately enable us to better monitor the progress towards the achievement of our development goals. The lack of data is an obstacle to the quality of policy, programming, budgeting and monitoring of projects. We therefore encourage UNFPA to continue to strengthen its cooperation with the Central Statistics office.

In addition, the high level of maternal mortality continues to pose a serious challenge to our country. Every 30 minutes a woman dies in Afghanistan from pregnancy related complications. The lack of access to health facilities in the rural areas due to the resurgence of Taliban activities and the lack of female health personnel, especially midwives, remain the principle obstacles for the improvement of maternal health in Afghanistan. We would like to encourage UNFPA to continue its activities in strengthening strategies to reduce maternal and new-born mortality in close partnership with the Ministry of Public Health.

Mr. President,

We would like to finally stress the importance of coherence at the country level between all UN development agencies and other development partners operating in Afghanistan. The
coordination and consolidation of international efforts would certainly contribute to improving the impact of aid in Afghanistan.

I thank you for your attention and look forward the support from the donor community for this Country Programme.
Mr. President,

At the outset allow me to congratulate you on the leadership you have shown in the work of the Executive Board. I also wish to express my appreciation to Ms Anne Venneman for her comprehensive presentation on Monday of progress and achievements set against the medium-term strategic plan. Finally I would like to thank Mr. Toole for his presentation of the new Afghanistan Draft Country Programme.

UNICEF has shown an admirable dedication to its work in Afghanistan. UNICEF has long been a primary partner of the Government of Afghanistan in ensuring progress of all MDGs relating to children, especially important to our country because 68% of the Afghan population is under 25. We continue to value our partnership with UNICEF as we fight together to provide Afghan children with better lives.

Mr. President,

The Government of Afghanistan welcomes the new draft country programme. We believe that it outlines an effective framework for partnership between the Government of Afghanistan and UNICEF in terms of aligning policies and funding with the priorities identified in our National Development Strategy. Its budgeting is well-balanced and correctly identifies priority areas. We particularly value UNICEF’s focus on integrated early childhood development, girls’ education, child education in general, and emergency preparedness and response.
Mr. President,

Our priorities are tested by recent challenges: a deterioration of the security situation, the humanitarian and food crises, and increasing poverty. The Taliban disproportionately harms the most vulnerable, particularly women and children. The insecurity they cause also impedes the achievements of MDGs 2 and 3, and obstructs access to basic services such as safe water, healthcare and education. Mother and child mortality in Afghanistan remain among the highest in the world.

With respect to education, as of September 2008, around 640 schools around the country are closed, including 58% of the schools in Kandahar province, and all of the girls’ schools in parts of Farah province. In the 10 months between May 2007 and June 2008, 161 teachers and students were killed, 57 through suicide bomb attacks, and 112 schools were burned. In the winter of 2008, security deteriorated even further, and in January 2009 there was a 75% increase in the number of incidents compared to a year earlier. Deliberate attacks against female students and teachers are typically particularly barbaric, including the acid attacks last fall, and the recently alleged attacks by poison gas.

Despite these challenges, Afghans still believe that education provides the best hope for a different future. From 2002 to today we have seen an increase in the number of children in school from 1.78mil in 2002 to 6.14mil in 2008, of which 2.19mil are girls. Still, only half of school-age children are enrolled in school, and there is great disparity in enrollment between urban and rural children. Thus we commend UNICEF’s approach in focusing on community-based schools that increase access to education. We also encourage the donor community to continue building schools and, particularly, training teachers, in support of the Afghanistan National Education Plan. Since only 15.5% of women in Afghanistan are
literate, it is particularly essential to train female teachers, and
to raise an awareness and advocacy program for local
community and religious leaders to stress the importance of
educating women.

Mr. President,

In addition to education, we must strengthen the state of
Afghanistan to protect our children from the Taliban, who have
been identified as a group that recruits children for practices
such as suicide attacks. Cooperation between UNICEF and the
monitoring and reporting mechanism for children and armed
conflict could ensure wider access to information regarding
child recruitment. Our government is also currently preparing
its first progress report on the Convention on the Rights of
Children. Child labor is a particularly difficult issue in
Afghanistan, where poverty and social pressure can push
children to leave school into exploitive work. Our Parliament is
currently discussing the ratification of Convention 182 on
elimination of the most serious forms of child labor. In
addition, we are revising the juvenile code. UNICEF can
provide valuable assistance to our Government in all this work.

Finally, Mr. President,

The situation in Afghanistan and the region is more and more
precarious. Violence in our region threatens to push more
refugees into our country. UNICEF will be crucial to providing
these people with urgently needed assistance. To coherently
adapt to the changes of the situation, we will need coordination
between the members of the UN family, the donor community,
and the government of Afghanistan as we work towards
improving the lives of children in Afghanistan.

I thank you.
Thank you. It is an honor to have the opportunity to speak to you today.

This is a key time for the world in Afghanistan and the region. In the last few months, international attention has refocused. New US leadership has promised more troops and a civilian surge. In a few short weeks, Afghans will go to the polls and choose our next leaders. Despite the continuing security and political challenges, this new focus has already generated several steps in the right direction: a civilian surge, attention on sub-national governance, a new international alignment with Afghan priorities.

The stakes for success in Afghanistan are high. This is NATO’s first peacekeeping mission outside Europe in its 60 year history. Some have suggested that Afghanistan will represent a definitive measure of NATO’s ongoing transformation and resolve and a true test for NATO’s future. In addition, a failure of international engagement would be a serious triumph for terrorism. As the world saw eight years ago, an unstable Afghan state can foster terrorists. Conversely, a successful Afghan state offers security for its neighbors and allies and can act as an economic hub and land bridge.

The time is right. The stakes are high. So today our discussion about how to achieve success in Afghanistan is crucial.
I have been asked to speak about the political and diplomatic perspectives on a strategy for success. In an audience of mostly defense specialists and representatives, my goal today is to lay out the correct civilian and political strategy to complement our military understanding.

At a time of economic uncertainty, a civilian strategy and military strategy need to be complementary. The US has recognized this, as President Obama stated, “It is far cheaper to train a policeman to secure their village or to help a farmer seed a crop than it is to send [US] troops to fight tour after tour of duty.” We also understand that no victory in Afghanistan can be purely military. Only a comprehensive political-military solution is sustainable and lasting.

My recommendations for a comprehensive political-military strategy would improve the understanding of the situation in Afghanistan in order to improve our actions in Afghanistan.

We need to cultivate two understandings: one, an understanding that rejects defeatist assumptions about the politics of Afghanistan and two, an understanding that better identifies the enemy so that we can defeat it.

Far too often, I am asked about the “likelihood,” or the “possibility,” of building a successful state and political culture in Afghanistan. To understand my country’s history is to recognize there is no question about a possibility—there is only the actuality of a stable, democratic state in our country’s history.

The modernisation of our country did not begin in 2001—it began in the early 1900s. In 1923, our first constitution enforced such laws as compulsory elementary education. In the 1960s, women voted and served in political offices alongside men. There was freedom of movement and security of property. The state
enforced a legitimate control that extended throughout the country before external powers interfered and violence unsettled our progress. In short, there has been a central state in Afghanistan; there can be again.

The Taliban also seeks to persuade the world, and Afghans themselves, that their movement is only “returning” Afghanistan to its traditional morality. But their barbarity does not represent any Afghan tradition. The Taliban is exactly the opposite—they are an anti-tradition, an anti-culture. They are a product of war and destruction, capable of producing only further destruction.

So we must ensure that our comprehensive political-military strategy is not stymied by wrong assumptions. A better political understanding of Afghan culture and history opens up new belief in our opportunity for success. Similarly, a better political understanding of the enemy opens up new possibility for their defeat. This enemy is comprised of Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and their international terrorist allies, as well as the destabilizing internal networks of corruption and warlordism.

In the last eight years, Al Qaeda and the Taliban have been able to strengthen and regroup. In 2001, they were not included in the Bonn political process, nor did the international community send enough troops to eliminate them. After their initial defeat, flagging international attention ignored the sanctuaries and sources of their external support. The combination of all these factors was a deadly recipe for terrorism’s strengthening and re-emergence. Recent developments in the region indicate that terrorism continues to find leadership and guidance from outside Afghanistan.

Beyond the Taliban, a network of corruption and warlordism threatens our Afghan state from within. Since 2001, old warlords have been able to gain new power by linking
themselves to the aims of the international community. Yesterday’s warlords with guns have become today’s warlords of position and money. The international community has continued to ignore the extra-legal operations of these power-holders, contributing to a deepening nexus between warlordism, drugs and sometime the criminalisation of politics. This internal weakness denies the Afghan people’s desire for justice and destabilizes the democratic process in Afghanistan. International efforts in Afghanistan should instead focus on supporting the moderate forces for progress. Moderate elements are a more stable foundation for our state.

Today we must also translate this better understanding into better action. Better action prioritizes security, strengthens governance and emphasizes regional cooperation.

First, the right strategy stems the insecurity to create space for governance. Where there is no minimum security, governance will be impossible. Thus, international forces can help our government in creating a human security corridor where we can move beyond only fighting the Taliban to delivering an effective system of justice, health care, education and safety of movement for Afghans.

We must establish this minimum security environment immediately. But for long-term success, troops should move towards establishing a more permanent security by eliminating the sanctuaries that provide long-term support to the insurgency. In addition, politically, we should work to weaken the Taliban and their extremist allies by separating out those elements that are willing to support a strong, stable, democratic Afghanistan and including them in the political process.

Second, the right strategy strengthens governance. Interlinked with fighting the Taliban is establishing Afghan government institutions, including effective Afghan national security forces.
At this time of economic constraints, quality of strategy is more important than quantity of resources. International support should be accomplished through a strategy that maximizes the impact of every international effort. This best quality strategy is coordinated, continuous and accountable.

There has been a recent improvement in the coordination of international efforts, but we must continue to be focused. Military efforts are still visualized through a province-by-province, instead of the national, perspective. Civilian and development work are often conducted by piecemeal non-state organizations outside of the Afghan government. Many of the foreign experts also do not stay long enough to complete their projects.

This does not have to be the case. Last year’s Paris Donor Conference recognized that international engagement should be coordinated around the pillars of the Afghan National Development Strategy.

In addition, how we spend the money must be clear and accountable. The Ministry of Finance has recently revived our donor database. International aid should be channeled through this database so that we can measure how well funds have been used. Private contractors must also be accountable.

Today the most visible test for strengthened governance is in the upcoming elections—a crucial moment for democratic progress in Afghanistan. We are happy to see full international and Afghan commitment to fair, free and transparent elections with a level playing field for all candidates. It is important to keep the right expectations: a successful election does not deliver a quick-fix solution to all challenges. Instead, our goal is to strengthen a continuing democratic process that is fully and completely Afghan-owned.
Third, the right strategy requires sustained regional cooperation. The region has the most to lose—and the most to win—from Afghanistan. Increased bilateral, trilateral and multilateral processes can reduce negative perceptions and increase positive, productive action. Together with Pakistan, Afghanistan has recognized that we face a joint threat of terrorism. We are coordinating our efforts to defeat this threat. We also look towards NATO and the US to support us in eliminating sanctuaries for terrorism in the region.

Beyond Pakistan, Afghanistan looks to bilaterally work with Iran, India, Central Asia, Russia and China on issues of security, border, trade and drugs. For the first time in a long time, many countries in our region understand the possibility in honest cooperation. The Uzbekistan energy supply and the Russian Federation’s facilitating of the NATO supply line are two important examples. In addition, trilateral processes with the US, Pakistan, Turkey and Iran are becoming important ways to forward talks for cooperation. Multilaterally, Afghanistan is committed to participation in ECO, SAARC and the contact group of SCO.

The focus on Afghanistan and renewed work through bilateral, trilateral and multilateral processes ultimately strengthen the frameworks in which they are conducted. And with stronger regional frameworks and organizations, we are better equipped to face the future. Afghanistan’s present challenges may very well be the catalyst to a stronger, more peaceful region for decades into the future.

Today there is refocused international attention on Afghanistan and a genuine momentum forward in the right direction. We must seize the moment to cement our progress in an improved political-military strategy. This strategy increases understanding of Afghan culture and of the enemy to prioritize security, strengthen governance, and emphasize the region.
Success in Afghanistan will mean opportunities realized: a state rich in minerals, energy and agricultural potential; a state located strategically to serve as a land bridge between Europe, Central Asia, South Asia and China. Afghans hope to become active and productive players in global progress.

Thank you.
Afghanistan on the World Stage

*Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development*

*June 29, 2009*

Mr. President,

I am honored to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in this timely and important discussion on the Global Economic and Financial Crisis. At the outset let me thank H.E. the President, for his initiative in convening this meeting at a time when the global financial and economic crisis seriously threatens the livelihood and well being of millions of people all over the world. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his efforts in this regard. In order to prevent lasting damage, particularly to developing countries, we must maintain focus and resources on the development agenda, particularly for those countries in a special situation, we should improve and encourage both North-South and South-South partnerships, and we must improve the quality of aid and accountability.

Mr. President,

The international community is facing the most severe financial and economic crisis of the past several decades. And it is those least responsible for it, the poorest among us, particularly women and children, who are hit the hardest.

The global financial crisis exacerbates other already severe problems: of energy, environment and food that particularly affect the developing countries of the South. Already poor countries are becoming even more mired in poverty.
Mr. President,

The global financial crisis poses challenges for all countries, but post-conflict countries, least developed countries and land-locked least developed countries face particular challenges. Afghanistan as a post-conflict, least developed and land-lacked country has been hit severely by this crisis and will find it difficult to implement its National Development Strategy and achieve its MDGs and other IADGs without intensified international support. Moreover the impact of the insecurity caused by the Taliban in parts of Afghanistan combined with several recent natural disasters has increased the need for additional resources for humanitarian assistance to hundreds of thousands of displaced and vulnerable people. Afghanistan and other countries in a special situation need additional funds and resources for social protection, food security and human development.

Mr. President,

We are at a critical juncture that requires rapid, decisive and coordinated action. To defuse this crisis, to address the causes of the crisis and to prevent similar crises in the future, we all have to work together to prevent the current tenuous situation from becoming a social and human disaster with implications for the lives of millions of impoverished people, the implementation of the MDGs, political stability and peace.

Mr. President,

Afghanistan believes that the United Nations is in a position to play an important role in coordinating international co-operation towards solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character. We encourage our international colleagues to make sure that UN development agencies are fully resourced so that they can increase their
technical and financial assistance to the governments of LDCs, LLDCs and other countries with special needs. The Government of Afghanistan also supports the Secretary General’s High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis in connection with international efforts on setting-up a Global Partnership on Agriculture and Food Security.

Mr. President,

Afghanistan also sees the necessity and potential of North-South collaboration, in addition to cooperation between countries in the South. We have an active and crucial partnership with our regional neighbors, and also with the international community as a whole, and we can testify to the value in different sorts of partnerships. Cooperation can be best accomplished through improving the operations of international and regional institutions, supporting international and regional cooperation, and increasing the effectiveness of international and regional efforts in recipient countries.

We urge donor countries to execute their bilateral and multilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitments. We urge them to meet their commitments made at the G 20 Summit in London and other international forums such as the Monterrey Consensus, the G8 Summit in Gleneagles, the Doha Declaration and others. We urge them to reduce allocation of ODA outside of the government system and channel more funds through the core budget and trust funds. We also call on developed countries and donor agencies to adhere to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in order to ensure national ownership in the development process.

Lack of donor coordination, incomplete reporting, lack of transparency and unpredictable aid are all challenges that need to be addressed in order to ensure the best use of our money. And particularly now, at a time of limited resources, it is
important that donors prioritize the efficiency, accountability, and the principle of national ownership.

Mr. President,

The Government of Afghanistan considers the substantive and comprehensive reform of the international economic and financial institutions to be a matter of urgency. This sort of crisis must not occur again.

Afghanistan joins all developing countries and reiterates their call for an early, successful and development-oriented conclusion of the Doha round of trade negotiations that places the needs of developing countries at its highest priority. Afghanistan also supports the Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration to implement duty-free and quota-free access for LDCs.

Mr. President,

Afghanistan trusts that the outcome of this important historic Conference will reduce the suffering of millions of vulnerable people all over the world and will protect the world from future crisis.

I thank you.
Ladies, Gentlemen, distinguished friends and colleagues, thank you for joining us. I am honoured and proud to welcome you to the opening of this stunning exhibition.

It is not often, in my official capacity, that I am able to speak of the joys of my country. And so, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my good friend Ambassador Mattusek for the inspiration and effort of co-hosting this exhibition, and to Mr. Helmut Schulze for giving me the opportunity to share and celebrate my country with all of you.

Germany and Afghanistan have always had strong relations based on mutual respect and understanding. This new exhibition, exquisitely portraying Afghanistan through Mr. Schulze’s photographs, is yet another example of this invaluable partnership. Germany has been actively involved in efforts to regain security and stability in Afghanistan, and has also given a home to thousands of our citizens. As reflected in this exhibition, these efforts, along with those of the international community, are allowing Afghans to continue to live their lives with some normalcy amidst great upheaval. And for that, I thank the German government and people sincerely.

Photographs transcend time, exposing our past and present, and carrying with them a message about what our future may hold. And Mr. Schulze’s photos do not suggest a desolate future; rather, they evoke the Afghanistan that I am proud of, a nation of hope, magnificence, and survivors. These photographs have
created an opportunity for the voiceless and heretofore unseen of Afghanistan to share a bit of their story.

Not only do these photos show the enormous physical beauty of Afghanistan, but they also show the long history of Afghanistan and the depths of its people. Afghanistan’s stunning landscapes have attracted millions of admirers, and for good reason; the surreal eloquence of the diverse and ancient landscapes captured in this exhibition speak volumes. But Afghanistan’s beauty goes deeper than Mr. Schulze’s superb photographs; it is a land also rich with minerals such as copper, iron, and other natural resources, and famous for the fruits of its fields. The wealth of potential hidden within these beautiful landscapes can, and should, offer an opportunity to pull Afghans out of poverty.

These photographs also show a country with a long and complex history. As the journalist Jason Goodwin once wrote, “This is a region that has swallowed civilizations, and sent the sands to seal them up.” Afghanistan was first inhabited 50,000 years ago, and developed its first agrarian society 20,000 years ago. From the ancient Greeks, to Persians, to Moghuls, Buddhists and Muslims, many civilizations have been born, met, interacted, and merged there. Afghanistan’s past constitutes a global heritage, one that is reflected in the people and the landscape.

In Afghanistan, tradition and modernity regularly meet and live side-by-side, sometimes complementing and sometimes resisting one another. Just a short way from here, the Metropolitan Museum of Art displays in another medium the legacies of these cultural presences and exchanges. And while this rich history cannot rescue us today, it can provide us with an important foundation for looking towards the future.

Unfortunately, the uglier side of Afghanistan’s history and present circumstances cannot and should not be ignored. The
last thirty years of Afghan’s past have been largely characterized by “fire and blood”, as we say in Dari, stained with the presence of consecutive foreign occupations, internal conflicts, and eight regimes, all of which were overthrown by violence. My country is often solely represented through depictions of a hostile wilderness pillaged by endless war; girls losing their faces to acid spray; explosions of people and cars; widows, orphans, disabilities. But the things that we read, see, and learn about Afghanistan, the legacies of decades of conflict, are not the only things to know.

Afghanistan’s long history would be nothing without the Afghans themselves. History has shaped and been shaped by its people, and is reflected in the faces, lives, hardworking attitudes and shared destiny of its diverse inhabitants. Despite enduring wounds of war, poverty, and hardship, Afghans continue to work patiently and to the full extent of their abilities towards a better life.

These photographs transport me and many of my compatriots back to the Afghanistan we have known and are proud of: far from the bitterness of bad news, an Afghanistan with high mountains, a rich culture, and an enduring people.
Mr. President,
Distinguished Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for giving me the floor. It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak again about UNDP’s work in Afghanistan. My government and the people of my country will always be extremely grateful for the central role of UNDP in promoting social and economic development. UNDP is Afghanistan’s largest development partner. It has been active in Afghanistan for decades, and since the fall of the Taliban it has provided indispensable programmes encouraging disarmament, sustainable livelihoods, and governance. Many of the countries here today provide resources for these and other essential UNDP programmes. Together, all of us have an enormous stake in ensuring that the work of UNDP is efficient, effective, and aligned with national development goals and overall UN policy.

Mr. President,

Since our last meeting in May we have taken important steps towards those goals. I would like to thank UNDP for working with us to address our concerns. The revised UNDP Country Programme on the table today is a more focused, more descriptive document that will provide a strong foundation for UNDP’s work in Afghanistan over the next three years.

Mr. President,

Afghanistan presents an incredibly complex set of challenges, with more than 60 donor countries active, more than a hundred
multinational aid organizations, 20 UN agencies and thousands of smaller NGOs, plus numerous Afghan ministries. This multiplicity of actors makes coordination a necessity, and also one of our greatest challenges. As we all recognize, the only way to find success in Afghanistan is with a unified approach between and among development, humanitarian, political and military actors. We must align our priorities under a single set of national goals and strategies, such as the ANDS and the recently-signed UNDAF. And we must encourage open and productive communication among stakeholders. Though many of these conversations occur in Kabul, here in New York we should provide active support to bolster our collective efforts.

Mr. President,

Over the past months, my delegation has sought to create stronger partnerships between Afghanistan, UNDP and donor countries with the aim of fostering closer coordination and an improved consultative process both here in New York and among our counterparts in Kabul. This Country Programme document provided the catalyst for this process, but it should not end here. It is crucial that we maintain, and further strengthen, these partnerships in the future to assist in the effective implementation of this Country Programme, and to promote constructive work between UNDP and other actors in Afghanistan under the guidance of UNAMA and internationally-agreed policy priorities. My delegation here in New York and my colleagues in Kabul are ready and willing to engage in this endeavour. We have a responsibility to ensure that UNDP’s crucial work in Afghanistan has the support and attention it deserves.

I thank you, Mr. President.
Ambassador Tanin listens to the Ambassador of New Zealand deliver a statement to the Security Council on the Situation in Afghanistan

The Security Council Chamber
General Assembly Opening of the Second Committee

October 2, 2008


Madam Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me like others before me, congratulate you and members of the bureau on your election as chair of this committee and we look forward to working on crucially important agenda of the committee during the 63rd Session of the General Assembly.

Afghanistan associates itself with the statement delivered by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf the G77 and China as well as the statement made by Bangladesh on behalf of the LDC group.

Let me also extend my appreciation to the keynote speakers of the opening session of the second committee, Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro, Deputy Secretary-General of her incisive remarks regarding consequences of delayed actions in addressing climate changes and current financial crisis, Mr. Sha Zukang Under Secretary-General for the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of his comprehensive and comprehensive analysis of the global economic trends and prospects, as well as Professor Ricardo Hausmann’s informative presentation on importance of growth and its linkages.

Madam Chair,

At the opening session of the committee many concerns have been raised by many delegates over shortfalls in MDGs, current
financial crisis, drastic increase of food costs, and their impacts on LDCs, LLDCs and Post Conflict Countries. These current risen problems pose additional challenges for developing countries, specifically Least Developing and Post-conflict Countries. This crisis reinforces the case for decisive efforts to unleash the latent economic potential of the developing countries. The generation of economic growth in the developing countries will induce further growth and prosperity in the global market, therefore the partnership for development indeed has reciprocal remuneration.

The challenges we face today are complex and daunting. The situation, clearly calls on intensifying our efforts to further highlight the inextricable linkages between security and development. We strongly believe that security and development are interdependent which necessitates sheer attention at the global, regional and sub regional levels.

The UN should take the lead in advancing the pervasive development agenda and promote a genuine and enhanced global partnership for development.

Madam Chair,

As we see, the United Nations has a three dimensional role in the promotion of economic and social development: (1) policy formulation and negotiation of international norms, agreements, goals and commitments; (2) development cooperation to facilitate the realisation of the policy goals and commitments; and (3) monitoring the implementation of these commitments. These internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, have been well identified and their achievements can be readily monitored and pursued further.

Today, further analysis and policy formulation is required in at
least seven important areas: finance, trade, technology, energy, climate change, food crisis and global economic growth. We need to strengthen the machinery for the monitoring and implementation of the MDGs and the IADGs.

If appropriately developed, the two mechanisms can usefully contribute to monitoring the implementation of the Internationally Agreed Development Goals, including MDGs. We expect that the developed countries will also inform us about progress on their MDGs strategies, particularly on MDG 8, (partnership). It would help us to understand how far their policies are in conformity with the guidelines of aid effectiveness as well as status of implementation of the commitments undertaken under the IADGs, including MDGs.

Madam Chair,

In advancing the global agenda, the international community will also have to be particularly mindful of the special needs and challenges faced by Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the countries emerging from conflict. The international community and the UN should address in a coherent manner the national development plans and strategies of the developing countries.

In conclusion, the international community has long been aware of the specific problems and needs of the LDCs, LLDCs and Post-conflict Countries. However what is lacking is a inductive global response to ameliorate the conditions. Concerted global efforts with a sense of genuine partnership can make a sea-change. We are calling for materialisation of such partnership.

I thank you Mr. President.
Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you and other members of the Bureau on your election and wish you a successful conclusion of our work in the Sixth Committee.

Afghanistan allies itself with the statements made on behalf of, OIC and NAM and given the importance we attach to the Agenda Item under consideration; we would like to add some points from our national prospective and highlight our views on some aspects of this Item.

Mr. Chairman,

Terrorism as an undeniable global challenge continues to threat peace, stability and development process in my country. The Terrorist elements including Al-Qaeda, Tainan, extremists and other criminal groups are responsible for the death of thousands of innocent civilians, burning school, health clinics and hospitals, destruction of roads, poisoning drinking waters and other unlimited criminal activities. Terrorist and extremist circles in our region are focused on destabilizing Afghanistan and trying to deprive our populations from their social–economic and basic human right.

The Government and people of Afghanistan reject terrorism as a
Afghanistan on the World Stage

criminal act and strongly condemn all its practices and remain convinced that terrorism, irrespective of its motivation, objectives, forms and manifestations, committed by whoever and wherever, can never be justified.

Terrorism is a serious global threat to international peace and security and fighting this menace requires serious and sincere global and coordinated actions to combat this menace. To this end my delegation would like to call on all parties to overcome the pending issue to conclude the Draft Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. And create an effective instrument to fight against this global challenge.

Afghanistan gives great importance to the UN Counter-Terrorism Strategy and supports the full implementation of all its pillars. Furthermore, my delegation believes that the pillar of capacity-building is an essential element to help the countries like Afghanistan and strengthen their efforts in the fight against terrorism.

Afghanistan supports the proposal of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud to establish an international centre, under the United Nations, to combat international terrorism.

Mr. Chairman,

Afghanistan is an active partner of the International Community in the war against Terrorism. We are committed to fight terror and secure peace and stability in Afghanistan and in our region. In this context, Afghanistan has been taking concrete step in National as well as regional and International level.

On the international level, Afghanistan has joined all existing international conventions and protocols against terrorism, and strongly committed itself to the implementation of the General
Assembly and Security Council resolutions relating to international terrorism.

Afghanistan is taking necessary steps to join the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppressing of Terrorism and also its Additional Protocol to this Convention.

We are closely working with the 1267 committee and other bodies established pursuant to UN Security Council resolutions to strengthen the effectiveness of the United Nations sanctions regime against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban Groups.

Afghanistan on the Regular basis provides with updated information and proposals to the Committee of 1267 and Counter Terrorism Committee (CTC), on new listing, delisting and freezing of banking accounts of Taliban and Al-Qaeda members.

Afghanistan provided its national report to the secretariat of the 1540 UN SC Committee.

The Government of Afghanistan has signed bilateral agreement with some countries on anti-drug and counter terrorism activities.

On the national level, Afghanistan has instituted several counter terrorism and anti narcotic legislative, administrative and security measures including:

- Adoption of the Law of Combating Financing of Terrorism,
- Adoption of the law of Combating Terrorist Criminalities,
- Adoption of the Law against money laundry and criminally originated incomes,
- Establishment of “Financial Transaction and report Analysis Center of Afghanistan, as a new anti money laundry units within the Central Bank of Afghanistan,
- Ratification of the UN Convention against Corruption,
- Establishment of National Peace Consolidation Commission of Afghanistan,
- Establishment of Council of Scholars and Religious Leaders to advocate terrorism as anti-Peace and anti-Islamic action
- Establishment of an Inter Ministerial Working Group (IMWG) within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to follow-up and coordinate the implementation of all international conventions and protocols, as well as the General Assembly and Security Council resolution relating to international terrorism. This Inter Ministerial Working Group (IMWG) needs the legal and technical support of UN and other relevant international organizations.

Afghan national security forces including the Army and the Police, alongside the international military forces, are actively fighting terrorism to provide stability and protect the Afghan people.

Mr. Chairman,

Terrorism is a global threat and needs a global and sincere coordinated approach. Only through an effective, sincere and coordinated approach the international community’s fight against terrorism will yield effective results. To achieve this objective, all member States that are not done yet, to become parties to the existing international conventions and protocols against terrorism and fulfill their obligation with regard to the implementation of the General Assembly and Security Council resolutions relating to international terrorism in particular the 1267 sanction committee against Taliban and Al-Qaeda groups and denying any kind of support to terrorists, destroying their sanctuaries and eliminating their institutional support.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.
Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to commend the Secretary General for his comprehensive report under agenda item 60, Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children. I also wish to thank Ms Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary General for her insightful briefing yesterday and for her visit to Afghanistan.

Mr. Chairman,

The Government of Afghanistan is still making efforts to rebuild its country, devastated by 30 years of war which dramatically affected the lives of our children, particularly girls. The major victims of the war in Afghanistan are our children; years of conflict in our country have destroyed basic necessities of life such as adequate shelter, water and food, access to schools and healthcare, and have disrupted family relationships. It has also created social stigma and post traumatic distress.

Afghanistan is strongly committed to the promotion and protection of the rights of children. We seek to accomplish this noble goal by providing them with healthy lives and a good education, by combating violence, exploitation and abuse and
by ensuring that those who commit crimes against children are prosecuted. As a country that has suffered from decades of armed-conflict, we remain committed to addressing the plight of our children by implementing our Millennium Development Goals and a World Fit for Children Action Plan, through the Afghanistan Compact and National Development Strategy (ANDS).

Mr. Chairman,

Since the fall of the Taliban, despite facing many challenges, the Government of Afghanistan has made substantial progress in promoting and safeguarding the rights of children. Afghanistan ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols in 2002, and included dispositions in domestic law aimed to protect the rights of children. Improving the lives of children and providing them with a better and brighter future stands high among our policy objectives. The establishment of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) based on the Security Council resolution 1612, following the visit Mrs. Coomaraswamy in Afghanistan in July 2008 and was supported by President Karzai. This initiative will further contribute to implementing our National Strategy on Children at Risk, which lays out specific activities to prevent violence and exploitation of children.

Mr. Chairman,

In the area of education, close to 6 million children have returned to schools - 35% of them are girls. However a great number of children, particularly those living in rural areas, continue to face difficulty in accessing schools. To date, approximately 1.2 million primary school age girls remain at home, due to a variety of factors including a lack of security and dire socio-economic conditions.
We call on our international partners to support the implementation of our National Strategic Plan for Education, whose objectives include the development of community-based schools that are close to home.

Mr. Chairman,

In the area of health, the level of infant and maternal mortality has been reduced by 85,000 and 40,000 annually. Over 5 million children were immunized against polio. As a result of the distribution of the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS), 81% of the population now receives health care, improved from only 9% in 2003. These services include assistance in the form of maternal and neonatal health, child health and immunisation, public nutrition, and communicable disease control of tuberculosis, malaria and HIV/AIDS. However, recent estimates indicate that the rates of child and maternal mortality in Afghanistan remain among the highest in the world. Close to 600 children under the age of 5 die daily. More than 50 women die every day from pregnancy-related complications.

We count on the support of international partners to reverse this trend by continuing to help us enhance the capacity of our health centers throughout the country.

Finally Mr. Chairman,

Terrorism constitutes a major threat and drastically affects the daily lives of our people, particularly children. Children remain the prime victim of terrorism in Afghanistan. As part of their intimidation campaign, the Taliban and Al-Qaeda have resorted to brutal acts and new tactics such as recruiting, training and exploiting children as combatants and sending them to operate as suicide bombers.
Barbaric Talibans are also attacking female teachers, girl students and burning schools. In the first nine months of 2008 a total of 199 school attacks have taken place resulting in 37 deaths and 33 injured.

We are deeply concerned about the large and rising number of children killed and injured by the Taliban and their attempts in reversing the gains made during the last seven years in promoting education and empowering women.

I would like to reiterate the Government of Afghanistan’s commitment to ensure the promotion and protection of the rights of children, girls as well as boys, but also take this opportunity to underline that we will only be able to ensure the protection and security of our children if we succeed in combating the physical threat posed by the Taliban and other terrorist groups. In addition, the extremist and discriminatory beliefs promoted by the Taliban pose an ideological threat to the youth in Afghanistan and the future of our nation.
Madam Chair,

Thank you for giving me the floor on a very important agenda item: poverty eradication.

Madam Chair,

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the G77 and China, and the statement delivered by the Bangladesh on behalf of the Least Developed Countries.

Let me express my gratitude to the Secretary General for the inclusive and comprehensive reports of the United Nations’ accomplishments and further activities on eradication of poverty and hunger at the global level. Afghanistan offers its support and commitment on the beginning of the second United Nations Decade for the eradication of poverty, 2008-2017.

We strongly believe that with the political will, commitment and rigorous action of the world community, poverty will be eradicated pervasively at the global, regional and national level, by the end of the second decade.

The panel discussion held on the Second United Nations Decade for Poverty Eradication recently at the UN, will substantially contribute to the discussion in the second committee on this
very important agenda item.

Madam Chair,

The Second Decade has a clear focus; special attention is given to countries in unusual situations and needs, particularly Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries. This decade should be modeled as a promoter of fairness in development in a highly globalized world. Poverty is a critical problem and raises global concern, thus eradication of poverty should be addressed from a committed, comprehensive and strong position.

The current economic crisis we face adds to the challenge of poverty and increases the potential inability of countries to meet the MDGs. Apart from the current crisis, other elements are contributing to the deterioration of poverty such as:

1. Fragile security, weak infrastructure, inaccessibility to advance technology and energy.
2. The decline in relative terms in agriculture.
3. Increase in oil prices and uncertainty in the exchange rate,
4. Growing energy demands,
5. Factors that limit international financial assistance and cooperation on capacity-building, and the rural development sector.

Given the importance of all factors above, agricultural development is crucial in responding to the food crisis and crucial in controlling poverty globally. Agriculture is the backbone of a developing country’s economy. Therefore, critical steps must be taken in all areas mentioned, including the agriculture sector at the global, regional and national level to help with the eradication of extreme poverty.

These steps are essential for countries with special needs in particular post-conflict countries. Most countries in special
situations like Afghanistan are experiencing numerous challenges such as insecurity, sharp rises in food prices and high commodities prices. The continuation of this food crisis will force millions of people to starvation and spark widespread instability. Consequently, global efforts are needed to address the current crisis in such countries standing at the edge of absolute poverty. We have the hope that the international community in the upcoming decade will seriously consider the critical situation of some countries and create an inclusive policy to address these critical conditions.

Madam Chair,

Eradication of poverty in the world is a collective responsibility based on the understanding that poverty is a threat to peace, security, and prosperity everywhere. The root causes of increasing poverty at the global level are well known. What is absent, is the political will and concrete action on the commitments made by world leaders.

I thank you.
General Assembly Second Committee Debate on Countries in Special Situations

3 November 2008


Madam Chairperson,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of my delegation on a significant agenda item of the Second Committee, “countries in special situations”. My delegation appreciates the hard work of the Office of the Under-Secretary General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked and Small Island States. We thank Mr. Cheikh Sidi Diarra for his comprehensive introductory statement.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements of Antigua and Barbuda and Bangladesh on behalf of the G77 and China and the Group of Least Developed Countries, respectively.

Madam Chairperson,

The Brussels Programme of Action is a partnership framework between the LDCs and their development partners. It contains time-bound and measurable goals and has set out seven specific commitments, namely, poverty eradication, gender equality, employment, governance, capacity building, and sustainable development. These are seen as cross-cutting issues that should be addressed in the implementation process. There is no doubt that the achievement of these targets would mean the achievement of the MDGs by the LDCs. In order to fulfill their commitments as set out in the Brussels Programme of Action,
the international community needs to take the necessary steps by supporting and equipping LDCs with the resources they need.

The Secretary General’s report on the LDCs highlighted progresses and achievements in the Least Developed Countries in the area of human development and good governance. However, significant challenges still need to be addressed. Increased poverty in the LDCs and the global financial crisis have multiplied the challenges of the least developed countries, in particular the post-conflict LDCs such as Afghanistan. Lack of security, a weak infrastructure, and insufficient capacities are primarily responsible for that.

The emergence and acceleration of the crisis has further increased the challenges of LDCs meeting the IADGs, including the MDGs. Such a scenario, no doubt, warrants increased global action if we want to secure the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action by 2010, which is only two years from now.

The LDCs are highly vulnerable to both internal and external shocks. The world is passing through a critical time and the most vulnerable countries are LDCs, LLDCs, and post-conflict countries. The continuation of the food crisis, financial crises and other challenges in the LDCs will hinder developmental velocity. LDCs are not in a position to weather further shocks such as a decline in exports, investment and access to capital that the current crises may potentially cause in the long run. Comprehensive and decisive policy action is critically important at all levels to overcome the current multiple crises.

The food crisis alone will drive millions of people into poverty and hunger. The LDCs are the hardest hit, particularly the landlocked LDCs and those LDCs that are emerging from conflicts. The comprehensive framework for action submitted
by the Secretary General’s Task Force needs to be carefully examined with special attention to LDCs, particularly vulnerable LDCs in Africa and Asia.

In addition, food and livelihood security in LDCs will be seriously affected by climate change. Urgent and decisive action is needed to address the climate change. The international community should provide necessary funds in a predictable manner to meet the adaptation needs of the LDCs.

The importance of the agricultural sector in the economies of the LDCs cannot be overstated.

Agriculture is critically important for many LDCs. It contributes significantly to their national income, employment and rural development. Regrettably, this sector remains the most underdeveloped due to weak infrastructure, lack of capacity and access to adequate energy and technology. In addition to that, the prices of the agricultural products are generally low and volatile in the international market. Unless these are addressed, a number of LDCs, particularly those are emerging from conflicts, will not be able to achieve the internationally-agreed-upon development goals.

Nevertheless, this sector remains underdeveloped in countries in special situations. Agricultural productivity in the LDCs continues to decline. We need to scale-up investment and provide modern technologies to this sector to enhance agricultural production.

International trade has assumed a central place in the global development process. It’s clear that exports from LDCs are facing increasing challenges. We welcome the offer of duty-free and quota-free market access by some developed and developing countries and invite others to follow similar path. In recent years, South–South trade, often coined as the new
geography in trade, has significantly increased. Nevertheless, LDCs, which are marginalized in North–South trade, are also increasingly marginalized in South–South trade.

Trade capacity-building of the LDCs is urgently needed. The Aid for Trade initiative should particularly support the LDCs in addressing their supply-side constraints and erosion of preferences. The accession process of the LDCs, particularly those that are currently in process to the WTO, should be simplified.

We have noted with concern that the special circumstances of the LDCs are not finding adequate reflection in relevant reports of the Secretary General. It is acutely important to analyze the status of progress in the LDCs on a sectoral basis.

Madam Chair,

My delegation attaches great importance to the final review of the Brussels Program of Action, which will begin shortly, and to the outcome of the 4th UN Conference on LDCs. These will further identify obstacles, constraints, challenges and emerging issues that require affirmative actions and initiatives to overcome. Hopefully, the outcome of the Conference will be a new framework for partnership for sustainable development and economic growth of the least developed countries that will assist LDCs to integrate progressively into the world economy.

I thank you, Madam Chairperson.
Mr. President,
Distinguished Colleagues,

My delegation, in its capacity as the Chairman of the ECO group in New York, has the honour to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/63/L.39, entitled “Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)”, sponsored by the 10 States members of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), namely, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Mr. Chairman,

The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) is an intergovernmental regional organization established for the purpose of promoting economic, technical and cultural cooperation among the Member States and stands on the same principles as those that guide the United Nations.

The ECO region is full of bright trading prospects and opportunities. Despite its young age, the lack of appropriate
infrastructure and institutions in its region, ECO has developed into a successful regional organization. Today ECO seeks to develop its infrastructure and institutions, on a prioritized basis, that make full use of the available resources in the region. Specifically, ECO has embarked on several projects in priority sectors of its cooperation including energy, trade, transportation, agriculture, and drug control.

In addition Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) has established relations and signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with regional and international organizations including the United Nations specialized agencies and international financial institutions. Consequently, ECO’s international stature is growing.

Mr. Chairman,

This draft resolution invites the various specialized agencies, organizations and programmes of the United Nations system, as well as other relevant international financial institutions to join the efforts of ECO towards realizing the shared goals and objectives of the United Nations, and the Economic Cooperation Organization, through regional cooperation, to achieve internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, stresses the importance of continuation and the expansion of the areas of cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization, appreciates the technical and financial assistance extended by the UN and its specialized agencies and calls for a further increase of this technical assistance of UN agencies to the Member States of the Economic Cooperation Organization.
In conclusion Mr. Chairman, on behalf of all ECO members, I would like to express my deep gratitude to countries who have signed up as co-sponsors of the draft resolution on "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization" and hope that this draft resolution will be adopted by consensus, as was the previous one during the 61st GA session.

Thank you, Mr. President.
Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, since my delegation is taking the floor for the first time during a formal meeting, let me congratulate you Mr. Chairman and the members of the bureau on your election. I would also like to thank Ms Susan McLurg, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) for introducing the report of the ACABQ on United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

Mr. Chairman,

Afghanistan, after twenty-five years of war and conflict imposed from outside the country, and six years of the Taliban regime, faced heavily damaged physical infrastructure, and a significant loss of human life. Afghanistan was hijacked by Al Qaida, who used Afghan territory to organize and lead their global terrorist acts and supported the Taliban in installing a regime of fear that brutally repressed the population. With the assistance of the UN and the international community, great progress has been made since 2001.
The Afghan Government has, as its primary goal, the creation of a stable constitutional, democratic state with effective institutions that can help our people rebuild their lives and their country after decades of war. This cannot be accomplished without the help and support of the international community. UNAMA plays an integral coordinating role by streamlining the efforts of the international community and supporting the ownership of the Afghan Government. National ownership of the reconstruction process is necessary to ensure the stability and sustainability of the results. UNAMA has done an admirable job thus far, and we look forward to working with them further as their new mandate is enacted.

UNAMA has grown since its creation precisely because it serves such an essential coordinating and advising role. The Special Representative of the Secretary General, Mr. Kai Eide, has become a trusted presence in this process, and we are grateful to him for his efforts. In order to effectively discharge its responsibilities, UNAMA needs increased staff and support, and more specialized expertise. It is in this regard that we fully support the proposed increased budget for UNAMA in the coming year.

Mr. Chairman,
The next elections, scheduled to be held in 2009 and 2010, will be the first to be administered by Afghan authorities since the 1970s. UNAMA is providing essential assistance for the Afghan Independent Electoral Commission in the voter registration process. Successful elections in 2009 and 2010 will reaffirm the legitimacy of the Afghan Government, and will
form a necessary step towards creating a prosperous and peaceful society for all Afghans.

As the Afghan Government puts all of its energy towards the Afghan National Development Strategy, we look forward to the increased coordinating capacity of UNAMA to help ensure the success of the ANDS.

Mr. Chairman,

The harshest winter in 30 years, combined with lack of capacity of the Afghan government, has aggravated the existing humanitarian challenges in the country. Poverty and lack of access to food, medical care and education remain major obstacles to equitable and sustainable development. There has been significant progress in some areas, but Afghanistan still faces the second highest maternal mortality rate in the world, and 42 percent of the country still lives in extreme poverty.

In addition, with almost 2000 NGO’s, 20 international organizations, and 41 troop contributing countries all trying to work together in Afghanistan, it is essential that someone coordinate all of these efforts, to ensure the ownership of the Afghan people and its elected government, and the growth of national capacity. UNAMA has proven itself capable of a larger role in the stabilization process, and we will support them in the coming year.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.
Articles and Op-Eds by H.E. Zahir Tanin
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic
Republic of Afghanistan to the United Nations, New York
“Don’t Forget to Reform the UN” - Op-Ed Published in the Guardian Online

7 April, 2009

After a week during which the eyes of the world were on the G20 summit and the state of the world economy, we should not forget that our international peace and security institutions are in equal need of reform – first and foremost the UN security council. After all, the next emergency calling for a global response could be in foreign rather than financial affairs.

Away from the cameras and under the public radar so far, diplomats at the UN in New York are quietly working towards strengthening multilateralism's muscle, the Security Council. This February finally saw the successful launch of real reform negotiations, which I have the privilege of chairing on behalf of the president of the UN general assembly. While differences on, for instance, the size and composition of a revamped security council remain, all delegations have agreed to work them out at the negotiating table and all aspire to forge a council that reflects the global realities of the 21st century, not the mid-20th century.

The international economic institutions now under intense scrutiny were set up during the Bretton Woods conference back in 1944. Only slightly younger and just as stuck in a timewarp is the Security Council, the most powerful multilateral political body. When they signed the UN charter at the 1945 San Francisco conference, world leaders entrusted the maintenance of international peace and security to the council, with the ultimate goal of, in the words of the charter, saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war.
Special rights and responsibilities were assumed by the big three second world war allies, Russia (then still the Soviet Union), the UK and the US, plus China and France. These five took up permanent seats around the horseshoe-shaped table and secured the right to veto any resolution tabled in the council.

From those post-war days to our post-cold war era, the council did not change much, even if the world did. With many African and Asian nations throwing off the shackles of colonialism, the UN's membership nearly quadrupled from 51 to 192. We saw not just new countries but also new powers emerge outside the west, as "the rise of the rest" created our contemporary multipolar world.

Yet while the times were changing at breakneck speed, the Security Council remained more or less the same, with the sole exception of the addition of four non-permanent seats in the 1960s. The current composition of five permanent (the P5 in UN-speak) and 10 non-permanent members, drawn from different regions and elected for two-year terms by all countries in the UN, is the enduring result of that 1963 tweak.

In the same year, a young and charismatic American president made the case for ongoing change at the UN when he addressed the entire UN membership: "The United Nations cannot survive as a static organization … Its charter must be changed as well as its customs. The authors of that charter did not intend that it be frozen in perpetuity." But ever since the year John F Kennedy spoke those words at the height of the cold war, the security council, the UN's most powerful body, has actually remained frozen in time.

Fortunately, it seems that we are now finally heeding his words. All the UN's 192 member states have signed up to the current negotiation effort to create a more legitimate and effective security council. Arguably, today's general public is more often
dissatisfied with the UN because it has done too little, such as in Rwanda in the 1990s or Darfur, rather than too much. The Security Council can become more effective and save more lives if it is widely perceived as a more representative and thus more legitimate body. Harvard professor Joseph Nye, who coined the now oft-used term "soft power", has stated that legitimacy, an important part of soft power, is in fact the main tool the UN has to carve out a place for itself in the international order.

Most high-level actors in that international order are now understandably preoccupied with putting out the economic fire raging in the global village. But they neglect the need to also modernise international peace and security institutions, especially the Security Council, at their own peril. The world needs to be vigilant in both financial and foreign affairs and ready to deal with not just incomes falling down but also peace falling apart in the blink of an eye. Only a few blocks from the ground zero of this recession, Wall Street, we find a strong and stark reminder of that imperative: the gaping hole of the World Trade Centre site, the real Ground Zero.
Afghanistan is headed towards a new beginning in its history. The elections due to take place in just a few weeks will not only determine the fate of the country for the next five years, but will also establish its future and the future of its people for a long time to come.

Our first democratic elections five years ago marked a symbolic end to decades of bloody struggles that have scarred Afghanistan over the past decades, and looked towards a secure and hopeful prospect for the country. This second election will determine the viability of that hope. The tomorrow of Afghanistan is at stake.

The international community is deeply appreciative of the amazing progress Afghanistan has made in the last eight years. However, it is also concerned about the sustainability of what we have achieved, and whether a strong and prosperous Afghanistan will emerge from these elections and over the course of the next few years. Afghanistan has rightly been placed in the international spotlight in past years, and this is especially evident due to the attention of recent weeks: the UN Secretary General’s report, to the 30 June Security Council debate, to the Security Council Presidential Statement, together with a number of national foreign policy statements, have all given particular emphasis on the need for Afghanistan’s elections to run smoothly. All of this focus has been directed towards the importance of successful elections to bring Afghans together into a unity of understanding, actions, and of responsibility for the nation.
In this effort, UNAMA has proven to be a crucial link between members of the international community and Afghans on the ground. It was worked diligently, not to run the elections, but to coordinate efforts and ascertain that all parties are playing by the rules of the game. Without their help and that of the international community, the elections could not be carried out successfully. The international community is involved in the process of conducting the Afghan elections because it recognizes that the future of Afghanistan is trembling in the balance, and that if the election process is not legitimate and if the outcome is not considered valid by all, the future of the nation will be undermined. However, it intends to play only a supporting role in pushing these efforts forward, through the assistance of soldiers, monitors from over 40 countries, and through the financing of the elections. It recognizes that the outcome is a purely Afghan issue, and that Afghans must choose their leaders as they desire. As Kai Eide, the Secretary General’s Special Representative to Afghanistan, has rightly asserted, a level playing field is essential at the onset, but the responsibility of the successful elections also lies in the hands of the candidates themselves, as well as to the Afghan voters.

The success of these elections will allow Afghanistan to move away from continued international military efforts, and toward becoming a self-sustained nation. It is essential that the elections are a success, because what happens in Afghanistan will also affect the stability of the region and the world. By the end of August, Afghanistan will hopefully be unified and strengthened, rather than fragmented and weakened. Unfortunately, elections are often divisive; but it is the duty of all Afghans to ascertain that this divisiveness will be a result of a democratic right of difference of opinion, rather than due to the coercion that has determined Afghan decisions over the past decades of occupation and oppression. All Afghans, both in the country and abroad, have a duty to help Afghanistan and to
celebrate the opportunity to exercise their right to democracy and self-governance.

The promise of Afghanistan’s recent progress cannot serve as an excuse for a relaxation of our dedication to the country. Afghanistan needs the support of its citizens and the unwavering commitment of the international community now more than ever before. The international community is looking to Afghanistan to prove that democracy and freedom can emerge from dire and desolate circumstances. Afghanistan must show that a phoenix can truly rise from the ashes. For the sake of nations and peoples across the world, Afghanistan must set the example of free, fair, legitimate, secure, and transparent elections.

The elections must maintain rule of law and give Afghanistan the chance to build on the progress of the last years. They provide the greatest opportunity to unite its people, strengthen and render sustainable its institutions, and provide a strong foundation for continuing efforts towards a secure, strong, and independent Afghanistan. We look to the candidates, to the voters, to the Independent Electoral Commission, the Electoral Complaints Commission, the Media Commission, the Afghan National Army and Police, UNAMA and the Special Representative to the Secretary General, and ultimately to Afghanistan as a whole to ensure, through their dignity of action and respect for the democratic process, that the elections create and perpetuate an Afghanistan we can be proud of, for all of our sakes.