

Statement By

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President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Excellency Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda,

Excellency Secretary General Ban Ki Moon,

Excellencies

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a tremendous honour to address this landmark gathering of Afghanistan's international partners and supporters from around the world. On behalf of Afghanistan, I welcome all of the distinguished participants to today's conference, and thank you for the special commitment and support you have shown for my country.

I thank the people and Government of Japan for hosting this Conference, and for the generous support it has provided to Afghanistan over the years. Even as Japan was coping with suffering and loss inflicted by last year's devastating earthquake and tsunami, it remained steadfast to its support for the people of Afghanistan. Mr. Prime Minister, we Afghans cherish Japan's close and historic friendship, and we thank you for all that you have done to help our country.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Over a decade ago, at the dawn of what came to be a new chapter in Afghanistan's tumultuous recent history, this great city hosted a similar gathering of world leaders united by their concern for the future of Afghanistan. Then, together, we charted a strategy for Afghanistan to rebuild itself from the rubble of three decades of foreign invasion, civil war, and the tyranny of extremism and terrorism. Ten years is not a long time in the life of nations so, as we come together in Tokyo once again to recommit to this historic partnership for Afghanistan's development in the upcoming Transformation Decade, we can be proud of the achievements this partnership has brought for Afghanistan.

In these ten years, with help from the international community, we have made remarkable progress towards healing the scars of conflict and destruction, and laying down a new path for our people to realize their aspirations of a peaceful, prosperous and democratic country. Today, millions of Afghan children enjoy access to education, and primary health care services reach over half of our population. We have built more roads in the past 10 years than in the entire history of the country before, and our people have experienced betterment of their socio-economic conditions on an unprecedented scale. We have revived government institutions and services throughout the country, and embarked on a historic journey of democratization, which has seen the enactment of a new constitution, the conduct of free and inclusive elections, and the guarantee of freedom for the civil society and media to grow.

However, ladies and gentlemen, as we look to the future, it is not just the promise of opportunity and the celebration of our successes, but also the recognition of dogged challenges and threats that must underpin our commitment for continuing our partnership. Indeed, despite all the achievements, Afghanistan remains vulnerable, as our economy continues to be underdeveloped, the private sector embryonic, and our vast natural resources largely untapped. Undoubtedly, it will take many years of hard work on our part as Afghans, as well as continued, empowering support from our international partners, before Afghanistan can achieve prosperity and self-reliance.

Speaking of challenges, continued insecurity is Afghanistan's biggest concern today, and perhaps the biggest obstacle to our progress on all other fronts. As the Transition Process gathers pace, and our national security forces gradually take over responsibility for security from the international forces across the whole of Afghanistan, we must do what we can to deepen the roots of security and make the transition irreversible. I highly appreciate the statement of strong and continued commitment that came out of the NATO Summit in Chicago last May. It is reassuring for the Afghan people that our young security institutions will continue to enjoy financial and material support of our international partners until such a time when Afghanistan no longer requires such assistance.

Afghanistan continues to face grave risks from common threats, notably terrorism and extremism. These threats do not affect Afghanistan's security alone – indeed, the region as a whole, and the world beyond, will not be secure for as long as the menaces of terrorism and extremism persist, enjoying sanctuaries and support in some corners of the region beyond Afghanistan's borders.

Among our efforts to put an end to violence and bring lasting peace to Afghanistan, the peace and reconciliation process is of particular urgency at the present time. After a number of unfortunate setbacks last year, we have now redoubled our efforts, through the High Peace Council, to reach out to all those Taliban and other militant leaders who wish to join the peace process and return to dignified lives in our shared homeland. I reiterate the Afghan people's emphasis that the renunciation of violence, the cutting of ties to terrorist networks and respect for Afghanistan's Constitution, particularly its guarantees of rights and freedoms for all Afghan men and women, will be the minimum conditions that any possible outcome of the peace process must meet.

While the peace process is, and must remain, Afghan-led and Afghan owned, it will not succeed without active and result-oriented support from countries in the region and beyond. I thank countries, including Japan, which have supported our efforts in this regard.

Just three days ago Mr Salaludin Rabani, Chairman of the High Peace Council led a delegation of the Council to Saudi Arabia, where we continue to seek the guidance of the Khadem Harmien Sharifain Sharifien, His Majesty Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz.

Meanwhile, I emphasise the importance of Pakistan's support for the process. I look forward to the visit of Pakistan's newly elected Prime Minister, His Excellency Raja Pervez Ashraf, to Kabul where we can resume our crucial discussion over the necessity of this process for peace in Afghanistan, as well as stability and security in Pakistan and the wider region.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Like the two milestone conferences before, namely the Bonn Conference of December 2011, and the Chicago Summit of May 2012, today's Tokyo Conference will go down in the development history of Afghanistan as a milestone on the country's long journey to self-reliance, prosperity, stability and peace. The commitments expressed at Chicago reassured the Afghan people of the international community's sustained and long-term support to Afghanistan's security. Today in Tokyo, I look forward to securing Afghanistan's economic development direction, based on our strategic vision for the Transformation Decade.

Today I request Afghanistan's friends and partners to reassure the Afghan people that you will be with us as we seek to strengthen Afghanistan as a peaceful, democratic and self-reliant country, and to translate your commitments into tangible action during the Transformation Decade. In particular, I wish to elicit your support towards Afghanistan's development priorities as contained in the strategy paper that my government has prepared for this conference, with the

aim of achieving self-reliance as early as we possibly can. In this context, sustainable job creation, building infrastructure, developing the country's human resource capacity through a robust system of education, fostering entrepreneurship in the society, and investment in the country's productive sectors, notably agriculture, energy, and mining are among Afghanistan's crucial needs if it is to achieve fiscal viability and ensure a sustainable economy.

I recognise, ladies and gentlemen, that the success of our development partnership will depend on our mutual ability to be accountable and to improve our practices so that the hard earned dollars of your tax-payers are utilized most effectively and transparently. At a Special Joint Session of the two houses of the Afghan Parliament convened on 21st June 2012, I pledged that, over the remaining two years of my term in office, I would ruthlessly pursue the agenda of good governance, accountability and aid effectiveness. Of course, this is not an effort where we could succeed on our own, without your full understanding and cooperation. Nonetheless, on our part, we will be extremely vigorous in our pursuit of good governance priorities, including the rule of law and the fight against corruption. We will also accelerate the process of institution building and reform, including reform in the electoral process so that the upcoming elections are transparent, credible and free from any internal or external interference.

Corruption, in particular, is a menace that has undermined the effectiveness, cohesion, and legitimacy of our institutions. We will fight corruption with strong resolve, wherever it occurs, and I ask the same of our international partners. Together, we must stop the practices that feed corruption or undermine the legitimacy and effectiveness of national institutions. I also ask of our international partners to do what is required to improve aid effectiveness, channel development assistance through national institutions, and work with us as we expand our capacity to assume the legitimate and sovereign functions of state. In this respect, I welcome the initiative to establish a mutual accountability framework which will be at the heart of our partnership throughout the Transformation Decade.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As a land-locked country, Afghanistan's future is mortgaged to the prospect of stability and prosperity in the region that surrounds us. Indeed, while all our international partnerships, whether bilateral or multilateral, are important for the future of our country, it is only in the context of a stable and economically integrated region that our vision for a stable and prosperous Afghanistan can be truly realized.

I would also like to thank India for hosting recently an important conference on supporting and attracting foreign investment in Afghanistan.

I am pleased to report that, last month in Kabul, we hosted a most successful Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference, where we took the follow up of the Istanbul Process a good step forward. I believe the Istanbul Process presents a unique opportunity for Afghanistan and its near and extended neighbors to engage in a sincere dialogue to build confidence and promote cooperation at the regional level. We look forward to further progress of the Process, including the next ministerial to be hosted by Kazakhstan next year.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Today in Tokyo, once again, I am keenly aware of the significance of the commitment that so many countries from around the world are making to support to Afghanistan. I am also conscious of the constraints that you all will have to overcome in order to sustain this commitment.

The principle of shared responsibility and a concern for regional and international security is at the heart of our partnership. However, responsibility to make Afghanistan peaceful and self-reliant is primarily our own as Afghans. I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, that we will remain steadfast in our commitment in this historic partnership.

Thank you one again Mr. Prime Minister for giving Afghanistan an opportunity again and providing it the venue to seek support that Japan has been doing so well in the past ten years and I thank all those who have helped Afghanistan in the past ten years. The Afghan people will not forget the contributions that you have made and will remember that it was with your contributions that their country is where it is today and I am sure we will move forward steadfastly and gain the aspirations of the Afghan people with your support and assistance.

Thank you very much.