



## STATEMENT BY MR. A. GOPINATHAN, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE ON THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN AT THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON JUNE 17, 2003

Mr. President,

We extend our warm felicitations to you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Security Council for the month of June. The Security Council and the general membership of the United Nations will benefit greatly from your adroit stewardship of the Council at a time when complex and sensitive issues remain on the Council's agenda.

Most appropriately, you have chosen to hold a public debate on the situation in Afghanistan as the highlight of your Presidency. Despite the scale and complexity of diverse problems it faces, Afghanistan under the leadership of President Hamid Karzai, has made impressive progress in addressing the tasks of nation building, political reconciliation and reconstruction of the economy. It is, however, critical that the United Nations remain fully engaged in monitoring and supporting developments in this vital part of the world.

We understand that while the focus of deliberations is on the problem of drugs in Afghanistan, the debate has been left open to a consideration of some of the other pressing issues involving the country.

Let me first address the issue of drugs in Afghanistan. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) has, in its report of February 2003 entitled "The opium economy in Afghanistan – an international problem", drawn attention to the serious situation that has been brought about by a rampant increase in drug cultivation and the threat it represents to Afghanistan and the international community. Years of instability, internal strife, mismanagement by the Taliban and complicity within certain quarters of the country and outside have contributed to the current situation whereby

Afghanistan has emerged as the world's largest producer of illicit opium, accounting for almost three quarters of global opium production. The report highlights that over the last two decades, Afghanistan's opium production has increased more than 15-fold, with production in 2002 at 3400 tonnes.

As the report indicates, Afghanistan's opium economy is not a country-wide phenomenon but is limited to a few provinces that have continued to defy the opium ban issued by President Karzai in January 2002. Almost 80% of all opium production in Afghanistan is confined to provinces along the southern and south-eastern borders of Afghanistan. This small area is the origin of almost three-quarters of the heroin sold in Europe and virtually all of the heroin in Russia.

Drugs account for as much as 18% of Afghanistan's GDP. As the UNODC report has sought to emphasise, the problem of drugs in Afghanistan can be traced to its socio-economic roots. The phenomenon requires to be tackled at a multifaceted level involving a comprehensive action plan providing for accelerated development in the provinces concerned, increasing literacy and employment opportunities and alternative crop cultivation options for opium farms. However, none of these medium to long term solutions can be achieved without facilitating a basic environment of security and stability.

Discussions at the Paris Conference on "Drug Routes : from Central Asia to Europe", on 21-23 May 2003, highlighted the nexus between drug trafficking and financing of terrorism, and reinforced the requirement for an urgent, swift and coordinated response to the problem. That this form of "narco-terrorism" has often been State-sponsored or assisted by unrestrained

agents of State authority have not made it any easier to control.

Mr. President,

India welcomes the efforts made by President Hamid Karzai and the Afghan Transitional Administration to implement the decrees prohibiting the cultivation, production and processing of opium, including illicit drug-trafficking and abuse. This is a qualitative step forward from the Taliban regime that banned production with the intention of inflating prices. To this end, the Taliban not only failed to eliminate the large accumulated stockpiles of opium and heroin under its control but also allowed de facto trade in narcotics to continue. President Karzai has indicated his Government's seriousness in addressing this issue. His decision has to be supported through the will of the international community.

India welcomes the significant contribution by UNODC and the United Nations Drug Control Programme as well as individual States to counter the threat of drugs in Afghanistan. The Joint Statement issued at the conclusion of the 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of India-Russia Joint Working Group on Afghanistan on 28 March 2003, expressed concern over the increased production of narcotic drugs in Afghanistan and their illegal trafficking, and emphasised the need for the development of a comprehensive strategy, with an appropriate key UN role in the process. India recognises that most of these projects are long-term but vital in the elimination of drugs on a sustainable basis.

In the statement made in the UN General Assembly on December 6, 2002 on Afghanistan, India had expressed deep concern over reports of an increase in poppy cultivation in Afghanistan and the fact that the momentum for putting in place an anti-narcotics strategy had faltered. We had emphasised the role of the international community in supporting Afghanistan in its drive to combat drug cultivation and trade, and the efforts required to extend development plans to different parts of the country.

In India's view, given the seriousness of the situation, its dimensions and implications within and outside Afghanistan, there is a pressing need to tackle the issue on an immediate basis to supplement other long-term programmes under implementation or consideration. Some essential components in such a strategy could include the allocation of

more resources for the affected parts of the country to bolster ongoing security efforts; enhancement of the capacity of the Afghan Government to enforce its ban on opium cultivation, production and trafficking; identification and elimination of the chain of trans-border criminals and their supporters involved in the supply and sale of drugs, drug-related money laundering, arms supply, terrorism and illegal immigration; greater cooperation among the countries concerned on information-sharing, legal and judicial matters including extradition of drug offenders wanted in other countries and interdiction efforts; and a strong crackdown on the warlords concerned and external actors involved in the facilitation of this illegal trade.

Mr. President,

India has fully supported international efforts aimed at the reconstruction and emergence of Afghanistan as a peaceful, strong, prosperous, united and independent nation. We have noted carefully the progress achieved in the implementation of the provisions of the Bonn Agreement, and coordination of various international efforts aimed at rehabilitation and reconstruction. The agreement reached in May 2003 to enable the Afghan Administration to centralise revenue collection is an important step towards the development of an independent resource base and should be adequately supported by the parties concerned. India fully supports the broad-based government led by President Hamid Karzai and appreciates his committed efforts at promoting national reconciliation.

It is towards this end that India has extended an assistance package amounting to over US \$ 170 million to Afghanistan. This includes a recent commitment of \$ 70 million for the up-gradation and reconstruction of a key arterial road linking Delaram in Afghanistan to port facilities in Iran. We have also trained about 500 Afghan nationals in various disciplines including policing, journalism, civil aviation, judiciary, diplomacy and agriculture. Unfortunately, transit-related difficulties prevented the supply of India's gift of a million tonnes of wheat to Afghanistan. However, a portion of the wheat was converted into high protein biscuits for the children's school feeding programme and is understood to be sufficient to meet the requirements of one million Afghan schoolchildren for a period of six months. We intend to build further on this.

Mr. President,

Security remains the most serious challenge to the process of peace and economic reconstruction in Afghanistan. Reports of increasing instability in Afghanistan due to the deteriorating security situation need to be addressed firmly and resolutely by the international community before matters go out of control. We extend our sincere condolences to the Government and people of Germany for the loss of 4 soldiers during the recent terrorist attack in Kabul. This incident, taken in conjunction with several other recent security-related developments such as the killing of the ICRC employee in March this year, highlights the increasing need for the international community to address the threats to regional peace and stability emanating from terrorist activity in the region.

The cause of this escalation can be directly attributed to the increasingly emboldened subversive and terrorist activity by elements hostile to the Afghan Government, including Taliban remnants, Al Qaeda and their accomplices, and their efforts to regroup with supporters from outside. Ambassador Brahimi, in his last briefing to the Council on May 6, expressed concern over reports of hostile elements crossing over into Afghanistan from its eastern and southern borders. More recent incidents have shown that infiltrations by terrorist and extremist groups from this part into Afghanistan have targeted international aid workers and coalition forces in a clear design to sabotage efforts aimed at national reconciliation through political and economic processes. Serious international efforts would need to be directed against this threat.

Mutual respect and non-interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan constitute

crucial elements in the return of peace and stability to that country. It is therefore vital that signatory States adhere to their commitments outlined under the Kabul Declaration on Good Neighbourly Relations signed on 22 December 2002. One way to ensure this would be to entrust the Secretary General with the role of monitoring adherence by concerned states to the Declaration. The Afghan Government could also provide valuable information towards any monitoring mechanism set up in this regard.

Another measure to facilitate a more secure environment in Afghanistan would be to proceed rapidly forward on the development of indigenous security structures as a guarantee towards the long term unity and stability of the country. This process requires to be carried out in a calibrated manner without weakening current resources and strength. At the same time, disarmament and demobilization processes should continue forward.

Mr. President,

We are at a delicate crossroads in the process of forming a stable and secure Afghanistan. It is, therefore, vital that the international community continue to engage with the same intensity, the task of rehabilitating Afghanistan from the dark ages under the Taliban yoke to the light of a new century under a stable, democratic order. Referring to the responsibilities of the international community with regard to Afghanistan, the Minister for External Affairs of India had stated recently, that, "the forces of terror, the forces of darkness, the forces of obscurantism and extremism will not be allowed to cast their long shadows over the future of the people" of Afghanistan. For this, the international community needs to persevere with commitment, solidarity and generosity.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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