



**STATEMENT BY MR. V.K. NAMBIAR, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, ON
THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN AT THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON
APRIL 6, 2994**

Mr. President,

I congratulate you on Germany's presidency of the Council for April. I also congratulate Ambassador de La Sabliere of France for his stewardship of the Council during March.

Mr. President,

It is ten months since we last had an opportunity in the Security Council to consider the situation in Afghanistan. This open debate takes place in the wake of the International Afghanistan Conference that concluded in Berlin on 1 April.

The Berlin Conference was held at a critical juncture. It enabled the international community to take stock of the achievements since Bonn. More important, it provided an opportunity to plan further consolidation of these gains by facilitating elections, strengthening security and political institutions and providing the requisite basis for Afghanistan's reconstruction and development. India, as a participant of the Berlin Conference, welcomes its results and congratulates the four co-chairs, the United Nations, Afghanistan, Germany and Japan, for their role in securing this success.

The successful conclusion of the Constitutional Loya Jirga and the subsequent adoption of the new Constitution were milestones in the Bonn process. We congratulate the Transitional Government led by President Karzai for the progress achieved since the Bonn Agreement. We welcome the announcement by President Karzai to hold the Presidential and Parliamentary elections simultaneously in September this year.

After decades of conflict and destruction, it will take time and patience for a fully functioning democracy to take root in Afghanistan. Till then it has to be nurtured carefully. Consolidation and extension of central authority requires a broad-based governmental process, and the country must be free from outside interference.

The international community's approach to Afghanistan has to be realistic and must take into account the complexities and difficulties on the ground. Forward movement in the electoral exercise in Afghanistan would depend much upon progress in

voter registration. A balance between speed and stability is essential for the success of the political process. Realism also demands a degree of flexibility in dealing with the situation.

Mr. President,

The Berlin Declaration of 1 April first highlighted the common resolve of the international community to defeat terrorists who undermine security and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. To objective observers of the situation in Afghanistan it is evident that the peace and stabilization process there remains fragile. The biggest threat to stability in Afghanistan continues to emanate from terrorism as currently manifested in the incidents of violence in the country, particularly in south and south-east Afghanistan. Therefore defeat of the forces of terrorism and demolition of the infrastructure of terrorism must necessarily be the first priority.

The report of the Council's mission to Afghanistan in October-November 2003 led by you, Mr. President, concluded that the three main sources of insecurity in Afghanistan were terrorism, factional fighting and drug production and trafficking. Under the sub-heading terrorism, the report also noted that "in the provinces of the south, south-east and east, insecurity is greatly exacerbated by terrorist attacks from suspected members of the Taliban and Al Qaida, and supporters of Gulbudin Hekmatyar."

Unfortunately, the situation is no different today. Continuing terrorist attacks by regrouped Taliban and Al Qaeda elements constitute the primary source of insecurity in Afghanistan. These attacks are also aimed at obstructing delivery of reconstruction assistance. The assassination of UNHCR international staff member Bettina Goislard in November 2003 and attacks against UN agencies led the Secretary General to report to the Council on 30 December 2003 that "attacks on international and national staff of the assistance community and officials of the central Government" had placed "much of the south and south-east of the country"... "effectively off limits to the United Nations, the assistance community and central Government officials." In his current report of 19 March 2004, the Secretary General states "insecurity in the country continues to follow a well-known pattern and has shown no signs of significant improvement" "Attacks by extremist elements on aid-agencies, both national and international, and non-government officials, continue to occur, predominantly in the southern provinces"

Despite the continuing threat assessment, the SG's latest report and the statement of the ASG for Peacekeeping Operations in his briefing to the Council on 24 March, made scant reference to security threats by Taliban or Al Qaeda terrorists, preferring to attribute such actions to "extremists". As the general membership is not privy to closed discussions between the Council and the Secretariat, we would like to understand the reasons for such downplaying of threats to Afghanistan from terrorist groups, particularly in the south and the south-east of the country.

Consideration of these recent reports of the UN Secretariat brings to mind a number of relevant questions. Is it the UN's view that these groups no longer represent a threat to Afghanistan or are these reports and briefings in the Council the product of

some compromise? Or, did the absence of any reference to these organizations imply that the work of the Security Council's 1267 Committee on the Taliban/Al Qaeda had achieved closure, at least in Afghanistan? It will not be incorrect to say that the steady dilution of reporting on Afghanistan over the past year or so has not always been fully consistent with the position on the ground. In our view, the reports of the UN Secretariat must be objective, far more discerning and reflective of the ground realities.

Mr. President,

Incidents of violence reported in other parts of Afghanistan are also a matter of concern. However, it is our expectation that the political process will subsume these local pressures and interests. The success of the Constitutional Loya Jirga is a significant indicator in this direction. Leaders, with diverse interests, from all parts of the country, participated in the Constitutional Loya Jirga; they became part of it and ensured that it did not fail. A democratic political process in Afghanistan would absorb in its fold the varying interests as indeed happens in all democracies throughout the world.

We agree that continued international presence is essential to discourage the resurgence of negative forces. However, long-term stabilization of the country requires the building up of national security institutions led by Afghans and entrenched in Afghanistan's ground realities. Unfortunately this process has not moved so far at the desired pace. India remains ready to contribute to rebuilding Afghan security institutions, in whichever way possible, in coordination with our Afghan and international partners.

The sharp rise in the drug production and trafficking is a matter of serious concern. Apart from undermining the process of political and economic reconstruction in Afghanistan, this has dangerous repercussion for the region and beyond. The international community must act quickly to curb opium cultivation by providing Afghan farmers with economically viable and sustainable alternatives.

Mr. President,

In view of our historical ties of friendship and cooperation with Afghanistan and the Afghan people, India has made a substantial contribution to Afghanistan's reconstruction effort. Despite our constraints and the fact that we are not a traditional donor, our present commitment adds up to US \$ 284 million, including 1 million tons of wheat aid. With the implementation of a number of planned projects, India's financial commitments for Afghanistan's reconstruction would amount to around US \$ 400 million. Out of our initial financial commitment of US \$ 100 million for Afghanistan's reconstruction, made at Tokyo Conference in January 2002, US \$ 85 million has been already operationalized. India had announced a commitment of US \$ 70 million for the construction of Zaranj-Delaram road in Afghanistan, which has been subsequently raised to US\$ 84 million based on the detailed assessment of the project requirements.

In partnership with the Afghan government, India has undertaken projects in a number of sectors including transportation, civil aviation, information technology, health, education, agriculture, information & broadcasting, telecommunications, power transmission, banking, urban development, development of water resources and industry, and road construction. We also have an extensive program for rebuilding of institutional capacity through which more than 700 Afghans have received training in India including diplomats, journalists, lawyers, judges, doctors, paramedics, women entrepreneurs, school teachers, officials from the office of the President, Ministries of Agriculture, Light Industry and Food, police officers, airline officials, surveyors and cartographers etc. Our projects have reached out to people in virtually all part of Afghanistan. I am happy to share with you that we have received positive feedback from the Afghan government, as well as the target beneficiaries, on the project priorities, content and mode of implementation.

Some of the major projects operationalized this financial year (2003-04) include reconstruction of Habibia School and the Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health in Kabul; emergency restoration of telecom infrastructure in eleven provincial capitals in Afghanistan; setting up of common facilities and tool room centre at the Industrial Park at Pul-e-Charkhi; supply of equipment for substations and power transmission line in Faryab province; drilling of 24 deep wells in Herat province, supply of furniture for schools in Afghanistan; establishing a printing press facility in Kabul; setting up TV uplink facility at Kabul and downlink at ten provincial cities; and setting up a new 100 kw short wave transmitter at Kabul. We have also supplied 115 vehicles to the Afghan National Army and 75 utility vehicles to the Kabul Municipality. We are also supplying additional 126 buses for the public transport system that are on way to Afghanistan.

Our commitment of one million tons of wheat aid to Afghanistan has been operationalized by converting part of it in the form of high protein biscuits for school feeding program in Afghanistan through the World Food Program. The deliveries of the second tranche of this aid have commenced in December 2003. As a result, about 1 million Afghan school children are receiving a package of 100 gms of biscuits every day since the beginning of the programme in November 2002. This, we are told, has also contributed to the back-to-school program.

We have also attempted to encourage trade and investment activity that should lead to enhanced income generation in Afghanistan. A Made in India exhibition was organized in September 2002 bringing more than 100 Indian companies together to Afghanistan. A Preferential Trade Agreement was signed with Afghanistan in March 2003 providing duty-free or reduced duty access on items of export interest to Afghanistan.

In the coming period, we expect to focus more on infrastructure projects. The work on the construction of the 2002 km road from Delaram to Zaranj is expected to commence by August 2004. We have completed the detailed project assessment on the completion of balance works of Salma Dam Power Project in Herat Province, which will involve an additional commitment of around US \$ 80 million, over and above our existing commitment of \$ 284 million. I am glad to announce that India government has decided to fund and execute this project. We have also decided to fund the

construction of a new Parliament building in Afghanistan. We will work out the details in consultation with the Afghan government.

With these projects, India's financial commitments for Afghanistan's reconstruction would add up to around US \$ 400 million. Most of the projects would be completed within the next 2-3 years. The Salma Dam would take 4-5 years. We are also engaged in the detailed survey and investigations on the construction of double circuit transmission line from Pul-e-Khumri to Kabul. We will examine the possibility of executing this project based on the detailed assessment of the project requirements.

India's program of economic assistance in Afghanistan is guided by Afghan priorities and ownership. In the report on Securing Afghanistan's future, the Afghan Government has identified agriculture, human capital, physical infrastructure, and improving security as among its priorities and these are areas where our programs have focused. Our relations with Afghanistan are bilateral and direct. The underlying principle of our cooperation with Afghanistan remains our sole desire to see Afghanistan emerge as a strong, united, independent and prosperous country. We wish to see full consolidation of authority by the central government. Our efforts in reconstruction and other sectors would continue to be directed towards these ends.

Mr. President,

The Berlin Conference has correctly been referred to as a milestone in Afghanistan's peace process. Its success lay in positively galvanizing international support for Afghanistan's political, electoral, economic and financial evolution into an independent, responsible and contributing member of the international community. It is therefore all the more important that the expressions of support made at Berlin be given practical dimension in the critical months ahead.

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