



**STATEMENT BY MR. NIRUPAM SEN, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, ON THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN AT THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON AUGUST 23, 2005**

Mr. President,

Please allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Security Council for the month of August. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Greece for its successful conduct of the Presidency of the Council for the month of July. I would also like to thank Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary General for Afghanistan for his comprehensive briefing and congratulate him and UNAMA on their valuable work in the fulfillment of their mandate in Afghanistan.

It has been a year since the Council last held an open debate on Afghanistan. I wish to take this opportunity to thank you, Mr. President, for scheduling this open debate on a critical issue that is so vital for the future of Afghanistan, regional security and, indeed, international security, particularly in the context of the struggle against terrorism. Needless to say, this issue therefore continues to require the most careful attention of the international community.

In his latest report of 12 August 2005 on Afghanistan, the Secretary-General concluded that the Bonn Process had enjoyed some remarkable achievements, in particular the transition to elected political institutions. He has correctly credited these achievements to the steadfastness of the Afghan people as they struggle to emerge from the devastation of more than two decades of war. Indeed, the Afghan Government, under President Karzai's leadership, has made commendable progress since the Bonn Agreement of December 2001. The installation of the Interim Authority followed by Transitional Administration, holding of Constitutional Loya Jirga, adoption of a new Constitution and successful conclusion of presidential elections on October 9, 2004, were milestones in the Bonn Process. President Karzai's re-election was a manifestation of the strong desire of Afghans to participate in their country's political process.

The international community now looks forward to a successful conclusion of the forthcoming parliamentary and provincial elections next month, which will mark a successful conclusion to the formal Bonn Process. We are confident that the present democratic process in Afghanistan would lead to the establishment of a strong and vibrant Parliament that would be able to play its due role in the development of the country. India has been privileged to be associated with the construction of the Afghan Parliament building, which will be a symbol of the friendship and cooperation between the two countries. As part of India's contribution to the UNDP project on "Support to the Establishment of the Afghan Legislature (SEAL)", to build capacities, 30 Afghan Parliamentary officials are undergoing training at the Bureau of Parliamentary Studies and Training (BPST) of the Lok Sabha Secretariat in New Delhi.

Unfortunately, as pointed out by the Secretary-General in his report, the completion of the political transition is a vital step, but this alone is not enough. The Secretary-General has drawn attention to the fact that Afghanistan today is suffering from a level of insecurity, especially in the south and parts of the east, not seen since the departure of the Taliban. He has drawn attention to the rising level of insurgency in the country as also the sophistication of the insurgents' weaponry. While pointing out that the southern and parts of the eastern regions of the country had borne the brunt of the recent upsurge in violence, the Secretary-General has expressed particular concern about the growing influence of non-Afghan elements in the security environment. Attacks by extremist elements, including those claiming allegiance to the Taliban and Al-Qaida, he has reported, take place on an almost daily basis. He has also observed that the Taliban and Hezb-Islami-Gulbuddin Hekmatyar are not autonomous operations and that their external sources of support must be tackled and that the insurgency's sources of funding, training and safe haven must also be effectively addressed. The successes achieved so far in the security sector have included the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and the containment of factional clashes which, as the Secretary-General has reported, had become a localized issue and no longer a threat to national security.

The continuing external support to extremist elements is aimed at undermining the central authority of the Afghan Government as these incidents of violence prevent the expansion of State authority, hinder reconstruction efforts and stall the democratic process. Presidential elections in October 2004 clearly showed that given the necessary will, such cross-border terrorism can be controlled and contained. A statement by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) yesterday provides a troubling assessment that despite the positive impact of campaigning and voter registration ahead of Afghanistan's parliamentary and provincial elections, the threat of violent attacks would have an impact on the process. It is clear that these extremist elements and their sponsors have decided to attack "soft targets" such as candidates, election officers, aid workers, local religious

leaders and others. It appears that elections were not the only target of these groups, their objective being the long-term destabilization of Afghanistan. The tap that controls the influx of extremist elements must not only be closed for the forthcoming parliamentary elections, it must be shut off for good.

We are in full agreement with the assessment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan in his briefing to the Security Council in June 2005 that the international response to thwart the destabilization strategy could not be limited to combat operations on the ground. It was necessary to resolutely attack the financing, the safe havens where they are trained and the networks that supported them. The recent bombings in London have once again highlighted the international ramifications of terrorist networks and the infrastructure sustaining them.

The international presence in Afghanistan provided by the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the US-led Coalition forces may be required at this stage but we feel that to address threats to national security, both internal and external, indigenous Afghan security structures should be put in place as early as possible. In collaboration with the Afghan government and International partners, India is ready to provide any assistance that would help in speeding up the rebuilding of the Afghan National Army and Police Force. India remains fully supportive of efforts aimed at the expansion and consolidation of the authority of the central government all over Afghanistan. The enormous task of rebuilding Afghanistan can only be achieved through united efforts of the Afghan leadership and its people.

Mr. President,

Afghanistan remains the largest opium-producing country in the world, providing nearly 87% of the world's supply. This accounts for an estimated 60% of Afghanistan's 2004 GDP. Drug trafficking is feeding criminal and terrorist activities. The continued increase in the cultivation, production and trafficking of narcotic drugs could undermine the political and economic reconstruction of Afghanistan and has potentially dangerous repercussions for the region and beyond. In response to a request by UK, lead nation for tackling the drug problem, for contributions to the recently established Counter Narcotics Trust Fund, India is exploring the possibility of taking up a pilot project on community development programme to wean away farmers from poppy cultivation.

As part of the international effort, India is committed to supporting the economic rehabilitation and reconstruction of Afghanistan. As the 6<sup>th</sup> largest donor

country for Afghanistan's reconstruction, India's current commitment exceeds US \$ 500 million, a substantial amount for a non-traditional donor like India. Of this amount, projects amounting to US \$ 480.82 million have already been operationalised or completed. These include food assistance of 1million tons of wheat supplied through the World Food Programme (WFP) to feed around 1 million Afghan school children every day; construction of the 220kV Double Circuit Transmission Line from Pul-e-Khumri to Kabul and a sub-station at Kabul; re-construction of a 219-kms road (Zaranj - Delaram road) at an estimated cost of US \$ 84 million in southwestern Afghanistan, which will provide an additional outlet to the sea via Iran; reconstruction and completion of the Salma Dam Power Project in Herat province at an estimated cost of US \$77 million; contribution of US \$ 200,000 per annum to the World Bank-managed Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund; and gifting of 300 vehicles to the Afghan National Army.

In addition to this, India has undertaken, in partnership with the Afghan government, projects in virtually all part of Afghanistan covering a wide range of sectors, including hydro-electricity, road construction, agriculture, industry, telecommunications, information & broadcasting, education and health. Some of the important projects include provision of 400 buses for public transportation; 3 Airbus aircraft to Ariana Afghan Airlines; Indian Medical Missions in Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat, and Kandahar; rehabilitation of Habibia School and Indira Gandhi hospital; setting up of a common facility and tool room centre at the Industrial Park in Kabul; emergency restoration of basic telecommunication networks in 11 provincial capitals; setting up of power transmission lines and substations in Faryab province; 105 utility vehicles to Kabul Municipality; restoration/ augmentation of TV hardware in Jalalabad and Nangarhar Provinces; and training in India of over 800 Afghans in different fields.

Mr. President,

The emergence of a strong, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan is essential for peace and stability in the region and beyond. In a few days, the Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh will be visiting Afghanistan in an endeavour to strengthen and support democracy and economic growth in all possible ways. In his own words, the Prime Minister has stated, "We have had historic links and relations with Afghanistan. It is our desire to see Afghanistan prosperous and strong".

Thank you, Mr. President.

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