



Statement by Mr. Saleem I Shervani, Member of Parliament and Member of Indian Delegation, on Agenda Item 19: Situation in Afghanistan at the 62<sup>nd</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly on November 05, 2007

Mr. President,

Let me begin by expressing India's appreciation for scheduling this discussion on a subject of great significance for us, our region and the world. I also commend the outstanding effort by the delegation of Germany in coordinating the inter-governmental negotiations that have brought forth this improved version of the annual General Assembly resolution on the situation in Afghanistan. We are happy to continue to co-sponsor this resolution, which should be adopted by consensus, as in the past.

Mr. President,

The General Assembly today has the opportunity to review developments since the High-Level Meeting held in this building nearly two months ago, under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General and President Karzai. We welcome the communiqué adopted at that meeting as a symbol of the international community's commitment to stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan, in an involvement that must be long-term if it is to succeed. Today's resolution is a further sign of our collective determination.

The international community shares the goal of creating a peaceful, stable and democratic Afghanistan, securely restored to the path of socio-economic development and anchored within its region. The central challenge we face in achieving this objective is the need for a security environment that is conducive to addressing these challenges in a developing nation that has undergone unparalleled levels of destruction and privation. We must collectively upgrade our efforts, directly and indirectly, to restore security to Afghanistan. At the same time, we must expand direct assistance in reconstruction and development, while simultaneously developing capacities in Afghanistan to enable maximum local involvement in nation-building. These aspects are reflected in the resolution before us.

Mr. President,

The international community needs to consider if it has done all it can to avoid duplication and improve coordination on the ground in Afghanistan, and if the targets we have set are achievable and based on ground realities. In all candour, there is room to fine-tune our efforts in both areas. Firstly, we need to set realistic and achievable benchmarks of progress. These must be based on the reality of where Afghanistan is coming from, rather than a reflection of an idealized version of what we expect Afghanistan to be. This is essential if the “national ownership” of our Afghan partners of the development process is to have genuine meaning. Secondly, we must expand coordination on the ground, both between ourselves and with Afghan interlocutors. Assistance must be more closely linked to Afghan priorities, as reflected in the National Development Strategy and the Compact. The challenge for us is to transform our commitments into realistic, coordinated and effective strategies and concrete outcomes on the ground, including through the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board.

Therefore, our collective goal must be to set ourselves reasonable expectations and build upon the significant successes recorded thus far, while recognizing that the road ahead will be long. We must redouble our political and economic commitment to help Afghanistan over the medium- to long-term, and maintain our resolve in the face of challenges in the short-term.

Of these challenges, none is more of a test of our collective will than that posed by the Taliban, Al Qaida and other terrorist and extremist groups. This threat is **the** key challenge to our collective efforts in Afghanistan, and its first objective is to weaken our resolve. Therefore, we cannot afford to underestimate the ongoing resurgence of terrorist groups. India fully supports the Afghan position that the challenge of terrorism, in particular the recent and growing trend of suicide attacks, cross-border infiltration, and the growing nexus between terrorism and drug trafficking, requires both a robust international political solution and a stronger military response at the local level. We need to display our sustained resolve, while steadily fortifying the ability of Afghan agencies to respond to this challenge. Most of all, terrorism must be addressed realistically, based on a clear-eyed perception of what and who are involved and how to respond to all aspects of the problem. We must not be tempted by partial solutions that provide temporary and local relief: terrorism cannot be fought piecemeal.

Mr. President,

A sustainable strategy for stabilization of Afghanistan must be predicated upon short, medium and long-term strategies to address the developmental challenge. The efforts of the international community in Afghanistan can only be sustained over the long-term if we invest in developing Afghan human resources. For this, a multi-pronged approach is required: at one level, we must invest in rebuilding the economic and social infrastructure of the nation, while generating jobs. At another, we must progressively transfer skills and authority to our Afghan friends, to enable them to take fuller ownership of the reconstruction of their country.

India is fully committed to implementing the benchmarks of the Afghanistan Compact and to addressing the inter-related security, political and developmental challenges facing Afghanistan. Our commitment to reconstruction, development and capacity building in Afghanistan is unflinching. India's assistance programme, in place since the Berlin Conference, has now reached US\$ 750 million. Of this total pledge, India has already disbursed around US \$ 300 million in the implementation of assistance projects that span the gamut of requirements, ranging from capacity building to infrastructure creation and reconstruction.

Capacity-building is a priority area for India. Thus far, we have trained more than 2,700 Afghan citizens in India, including students and public officials. We are also implementing a capacity-development programme in public administration, in partnership with the UNDP, to depute 30 Indian civil servants to assist in Afghan Ministries. In addition, India is including a strong capacity-development component in all infrastructure projects it is executing in Afghanistan. Apart from ongoing mega-infrastructure projects, India is also focusing on Small Development Projects. These include schemes requiring the participation of local communities and aimed at providing direct "peace dividends" in areas that are yet to see development. India has worked to align its assistance programmes with Afghan priorities, focusing on local implementation, management and ownership of assets.

Mr President,

Regional cooperation is also a key pillar to stabilize Afghanistan. Regional economic cooperation is an important benchmark of the Compact, and is a strategic element of the National Development Strategy. Afghanistan's entry into the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation in April 2007 will not only further strengthen its historical links with the South Asian region, it will also provide the region lasting benefits in free trade and shared economic activities. All of this has the potential to contribute in turn to the stabilization of Afghanistan itself, but also within our region. In this context, several important regional cooperation events have taken place over the past few years, including the Kabul and New Delhi Regional Economic Cooperation Conferences.

However, the central challenge in our region is the need to develop measures to implement programmes evolved in regional processes. These include resolving impediments that hinder the expansion of commercial and economic linkages, including barriers to effective overland trade and transit, limited regional trade and business linkages, and other measures to contribute to the early realization of Afghanistan's historic role as a "land-bridge" between South Asia, Central Asia and West Asia. At the same time, our region also needs to consider ways of addressing regional and trans-regional political and security challenges, such as cross-border terrorism, cooperation in regional enforcement and in identifying collective approaches to expand governance and enforcement capacities.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, it is our conviction that the best riposte to those who challenge the supportive role of the international community in Afghanistan is to display our heightened resolve. At the same time, we must also work together in a more effective partnership, with each other and the Government of Afghanistan. Most of all, we should expand regional cooperation in the common interest of all. Finally, our efforts to achieve greater donor coherence need to be paralleled by efforts to build incrementally on the many impressive successes recorded thus far. These are the key elements for us to build upon the gains collectively made since the fall of the Taliban.

I thank you.

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