

From that standpoint, our collective energies must be directed towards what is very clearly the first priority for the Afghan people: security. As the Report of the Secretary-General notes, provinces not affected by violence have “demonstrated an increasing capacity for delivering governance and economic development”. India is convinced that effective, people-centric administration closely follows robust efforts to provide security. Development and security are closely intertwined, and on both, the international community and the UN must be in closer coordination with each other and with relevant Afghan agencies.

To do so, on the one hand, while pressing forward forcefully in terms of security operations, we must also pay more attention to building capacity in the Afghan National Army and the National Police. Both require much more support in terms of training and provision of equipment, and there is need devise new strategies to achieve optimum results here. We must also bolster the security effort by stronger collective action, within Afghanistan and outside, in ensuring that terrorist groups and their patrons are deprived of shelter, financing and ideological support. We should neither underestimate the Taliban and Al-Qaeda nor fight terrorism with any less military and political determination than in the immediate post-2001 days.

The counter-narcotics effort is precisely at the intersection of the effort to assist Government establish its authority, the fight against terror and organized crime, and the challenge of poverty alleviation and development. The UNSG’s Report exhorts government to “muster the political will” on eradication (sensitivities on this exist) and take measures against erring public officials and large land owners. This is part of the picture but equally important are effective disincentives against poppy cultivation in contrast to efforts to “legitimize the practice” via so-called “legal opiates”. However, international partners must also make corresponding efforts to upgrade Afghan capacity to take more effective action to prevent cross-border smuggling and movements, and work unitedly in support of actions by Afghan agencies, and internationally, to stem demand for narcotics products.

In other words, while consolidating our efforts internationally on the security front, we must also simultaneously ramp up efforts to build local capacity across the board—from administration to security, from civil engineering to medical science. For India, capacity-building is a priority area, as we believe that this is one area of assistance that requires minimal investment, but yields maximal long-term benefits. Training programmes can be effected both in our own countries, and through deputation of experts in Afghanistan; indeed, a useful capacity building strategy should have a mixture of both elements. Additionally, a core capacity-building component can be added easily to all our aid projects in Afghanistan—India is already including a strong capacity-development component in all infrastructure projects it is executing in Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

We must also introspect about the methods we employ to achieve these goals. Any objective analysis would tell us that despite the large investment in human capital and treasury resources, the international community is still faced with a significant challenge in ensuring that our objectives are met in Afghanistan. Quite clearly, apart from underlining our unshakeable determination to stay the course in Afghanistan, we need to improve the cohesion of our efforts.

To put it another way, to strengthen the connection between the Afghan people and their Government requires far more coordination amongst international partners, and between us and the Afghan Government. The UN is not only best qualified, but also the most appropriate body to do so. Thus, the central and impartial role of the UN in leading our collective efforts in Afghanistan was affirmed by the high-level meeting of JCMB member countries in the UN last September. However, we cannot achieve better coordination unless we give UNAMA the tools to bring about greater cohesion; and better cohesion is predicated upon more comprehensive access to information. Thus, in providing a mandate for UNAMA to play a coordinating role, it is important to clearly outline an operational relationship between these two bodies, so that information on aid flows and on projects under implementation can be comprehensively mapped.

At the same time, based on better access to information on existing assistance activities, UNAMA must also be mandated to increasingly streamline international assistance in support of a prioritized Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS), once adopted, and the core Budget. This will have the effect of bringing credibility to the ANDS while bolstering the Budget, and, at the same time, underscore that our assistance is in line with priorities set by Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

India is fully committed to implementing 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 has now exceeded US\$750 million, and it spans the gamut of requirements, ranging from developing capacity to infrastructure and reconstruction. As a committed development partner of Afghanistan, India is willing to actively participate in any UN-led effort to improve donor cohesion, in support of Afghan-defined priorities.

In conclusion, Mr President, let me also reiterate our abiding belief in the determination of the Afghan people to look beyond the tragedies of the past, and to seize the opportunities that the future holds. The international community must not fail them by displaying weakness of resolve, or by setting unrealistic benchmarks of progress. Our approach needs to be guided by the recognition of the distance Afghanistan has traversed in the past six years, rather than being derailed by the image of an idealized version of what we would like Afghanistan to be. We hope recognition of these realities increasingly informs discussions on the subject of assistance to Afghanistan.

I thank you, Mr.President.

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