



STATEMENT BY MR. NIRUPAM SEN, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, ON
THE REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL ON THE SITUATION IN
AFGHANISTAN AT THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON OCTOBER 14, 2008



Mr. President,

Let me begin by formally welcoming you both to your new post, and to the Presidency of this Council. I also wish to express appreciation for scheduling today's debate on the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, and the situation in that country. This is a topic of immediate interest for our delegation. We also welcome the report of the Secretary-General,

while thanking Ambassador Eide for his comprehensive briefing.

Mr President,

The latest report of the UN Secretary-General makes it clear that we stand at a very difficult juncture in Afghanistan. The escalation in asymmetric attacks to include areas that were cleared of the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda is a deeply worrying sign. The fact that civilians, humanitarian workers, UN

convoys and diplomatic representations—including our Mission in Kabul—have been attacked clearly underlines the barbarity of the foe that we face. The escalating civilian death toll is truly distressing, but the ultimate responsibility for such casualties must be laid at the door of the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, and those who support and empower them. Such callous violence underlines the need to ensure that care is taken in our collective actions and messages. We must avoid giving them a sense of comfort or a hint of desperation, but most of all, we must not dignify them by according terrorists parity with the forces of order. It is in this context that we feel a sense of some discomfort with references in this report to casualties caused by anti-government forces and “pro-government forces”.

Mr President, the course ahead may be difficult, but it is clear. We have no other option but to collectively work on a three-pronged strategy in Afghanistan. One element in this must be security, for without security neither the Afghan people nor those of our own countries will see the long-awaited peace dividend after decades of privation in Afghanistan. A second element must be to raise governance capacities in Afghanistan, otherwise we run the risk of placing responsibility upon our Afghan partners

without ensuring that they have the wherewithal to live up to it. The third element is the regional aspect, because unless Afghanistan is at peace within its region, and equally, vice versa, we cannot hope to stabilize Afghanistan solely from within. I should like to briefly elaborate on these three inter-related aspects.

Firstly, security. Now is not the moment to for doubts or hesitation in implementing robust measures within Afghanistan, while expanding coordinated politico-military efforts beyond Afghanistan’s borders. We need to go much further in realizing the well-established objective of degrading the ability of the Taliban to fight, while simultaneously denying them safe-havens, finances and armaments. There must be a much closer alignment between the consistent application of force wherever terrorist groups are present, and the political objectives of our efforts in Afghanistan, in which UNAMA must play an important role.

This brings me to my second point, which relates to development and international assistance. With the adoption of the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS) at the Paris Conference this June, we now have a clear road map. From the new mandate of UNAMA, we have a designated guide to help us align our

assistance in accordance with this strategy. The onus is upon us to take forward our efforts in a manner that coheres with the objectives set out in the ANDS. In this, UNAMA and the Afghan government must play a leading role. We share the sense reflected in the UNSG's report of the need for the international community to provide not just the resources but also political momentum to "turn back negative trends and accelerate progress in those areas where we have achieved success". In the particular context of the UN, it is now essential that we back our stated commitment to this new role for UNAMA by ensuring that it actually has the resources to do so. We also echo the call made by several speakers for greater efforts to address the worsening humanitarian situation, in particular, the food crisis.

In the specific context of resources, India also supports the increasing streamlining of assistance through the Afghan national Budget. Sustainable progress depends on our ability to mentor capacity building in all sectors of governance, including the Budgetary process as much as other mechanisms of government. At the same time, we must also ensure that adequate resources are made available for such newly-trained government agencies. It is for this reason that capacity-building

is a priority element in each of India's assistance projects in Afghanistan. I should in this context like to add that India has recently announced an increase in its commitment to Afghanistan, which will now amount to US \$ 1.2 billion. We are also pleased to have completed the Zaranj-Delaram highway, which is one of three major infrastructure projects India is undertaking in Afghanistan.

Mr President,

Regional cooperation is the third leg of the triad of elements that must be implemented in parallel to stabilize Afghanistan. This includes, but is not limited to, regional economic cooperation. Afghanistan's entry into the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, and its membership in other regional groups such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are aimed at revitalizing Afghanistan's historic linkages with the countries of its region. The central challenge that remains, however, is to ensure that programmes evolved in such regional processes are actually implemented. These include resolving impediments that hinder the expansion of commercial and economic linkages, including barriers to effective overland trade and transit, as well as to the operation of mechanisms to deal

with the challenge posed by trafficking in drugs, cross-border terrorism and so on. Eventually, every challenge is an opportunity, but we need to make greater efforts to implement measures before we can benefit from the opportunities.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, I must reiterate the need to avoid excessive expectations. While it is tempting to attempt to replicate our own socio-economic models in a country that needs every form of assistance after decades of conflict, we cannot realistically

resolve all of Afghanistan's problems at once. We must therefore accept that progress will continue to take place sectorally, partially and sometimes even episodically. Unless we display patience and perseverance, however, we cannot ensure that we truly follow a demand-driven approach on the ground, and without such an approach, our best efforts will not have the necessary legitimacy. It is for this reason that we reiterate the importance of an Afghan-led process of prioritization of tasks.

I thank you, Mr. President.

[BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)