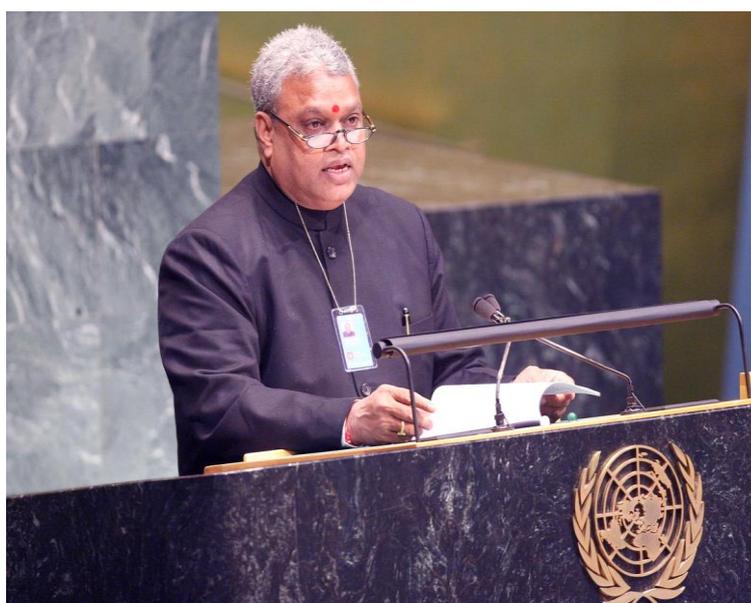




STATEMENT BY MR. K. YERRANNAIDU, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 17 – THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN AT THE 63RD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON NOVEMBER 10, 2008



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 commend the effort by the delegation of Germany in coordinating inter-governmental negotiations that have led us to this annual General Assembly resolution on the situation in Afghanistan. We are happy to continue to co-sponsor this resolution, which is traditionally adopted by consensus.

Mr President,

The arrangement of this resolution is in accordance with a few central themes. Thus the operative section of the text begins with issues relating to security, and follows up thereafter with paragraphs on governance, human rights, rule of law, economic and social development, counter narcotics and finally, coordination issues. It therefore accords with our perspective of the substance of the challenge that the international community faces in Afghanistan. A similar perspective is borne out in the latest report of the UN Secretary-General on the scale of

the challenge and the difficulties that beset our efforts to assist Afghanistan.

Thus, as both the resolution and the Secretary-General's report before us underscore, the escalation in asymmetric attacks in areas cleared of the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda is deeply worrying. Civilians, humanitarian workers, international staff and diplomatic personnel—including our Mission in Kabul—have been attacked. While we correctly condemn the perpetrators of these savage acts, the ultimate responsibility lies with those who support, finance and empower the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, and other terrorist and criminal groups. Their acts of violence are callous and brutal, but not mindless, since they deliberately aim to weaken the resolve of the Afghan people and the international community. In fact however, the increase in random acts of violence targeting civilians only illustrates the desperation of terrorist groups in seeking to convert strategic defeat into tactical advantage.

It is for this reason that we need to pay attention to the signals we are sending through our actions and messages. Not only should we avoid inadvertently giving terrorists and their supporters comfort, we must also ensure that our legitimate concern at the complexity of the challenge is not mistaken for a weakening of our collective will to win this war. It is also important that we ensure that we do not accord the terrorists parity with the legitimate government of Afghanistan, or the international community that acts in support of the latter. But most of all, it is essential that we focus on ensuring that our message is clear and unequivocal—something that we occasionally neglect in the annual UNGA resolution on Afghanistan. It is in this sense that we commend the effort made this year to

sharpen the focus of this text on several key messages.

To India, Mr President, the central thrust of the message that we see in this resolution is clear: our support for and commitment to the central challenge in Afghanistan is unshaken. We will not be diverted from the task of helping the people of Afghanistan bring back to their nation peace, order, stability, governance and development, based upon the traditionally moderate and inclusive culture of Afghanistan. We may differ individually in prioritising and selecting strategies to reach the goal, but there should be no mistaking the collective determination of the international community to the larger goal.

From this standpoint, therefore, the road ahead is clear. India believes that there is no alternative but to work on simultaneously implementing a three-pronged strategy in Afghanistan. One element in this must be security, for without security neither the people of Afghanistan nor our own citizens can hope to see a peace dividend after decades of strife in Afghanistan. While we accept the argument that seems to be made more regularly of late that Afghanistan cannot be secured through military means alone, the converse is also true: without a robust military effort, we cannot secure Afghanistan through any other means either. It is for this reason that India sees a need for a much closer alignment between the consistent application of force wherever terrorist groups are present, and the achievement of the political objectives of our efforts in Afghanistan.

A second element must be to raise governance capacities in Afghanistan, to ensure that our Afghan partners will be left with the capacity and the resources to chart their own road,

whenever the time for that comes. Developmental efforts are an important part of it, because any long term strategy of stabilizing Afghanistan must be predicated upon creating an impetus from the ground that builds upon ground cleared through military measures. Here too, we must collectively ensure better coordination of our collective efforts in support of the Government of Afghanistan. To begin with, we must make a greater effort to offset the humanitarian challenge posed by drought, climatic hardship and food scarcity.

The third element is to ensure that Afghanistan is at peace within its region, and vice versa. Without this, we cannot hope to stabilize Afghanistan solely from within. 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 are aimed at revitalizing Afghanistan's historic linkages with the countries of its region. The central challenge remains to ensure that programmes evolved in regional mechanisms are implemented. These include resolving 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. This is particularly so in the southern and eastern regions, where countering narcotics production remains an endemic problem. Unless robust security measures are followed by a larger strategy of crop substitution and securing market access for farmers, we cannot expect long term success in countering the production of narcotics in the region.

Mr. President,

In context of the regional aspect, I should like to reaffirm India's national commitment to assisting Afghanistan in this complex moment in its transition. We do so not only because of the long historical and cultural ties between our people, and not only because of the excellent relationship our two countries enjoy, but also because history has shown us that regional prosperity, security and progress is indivisible. Therefore our consistent effort has been to design our assistance programmes in a manner that focuses upon bringing developmental benefits both at the local level, and also at the larger national level. Not only has India recently announced an increase in its commitment to Afghanistan, now amounting to US \$ 1.2 billion, we are pleased to have completed the construction of the Zaranj-Delaram highway in Western Afghanistan. This is one of three major infrastructure projects India is undertaking in Afghanistan—the others being a large hydroelectric project and a large power transmission project. Another project of considerable symbolic value for us is the construction of a parliament building in Afghanistan. We hope to begin construction later this month.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, I should like to revert to the message of our resolution. For India, it is important that the clarity of our message should not be diluted by adding excessive expectations based on efforts that ultimately tend to replicate our national socio-economic models in an inappropriate setting. We need to remind ourselves that we cannot realistically resolve all of Afghanistan's problems at once. Given the challenge that faced us a little over seven years ago, we should recognize that progress will continue to be

recorded, but sectorally and partially. Patience and perseverance are essential for the long-term success of our investment: that and a willingness to listen to those whom we seek to

help. It is for this reason that an Afghan-led process of prioritization of tasks remains essential.

I thank you, Mr. President.

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