



STATEMENT BY MR. KHAGEN DAS, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN AT THE 64TH SESSION OF THE UNITED GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON NOVEMBER 09, 2009



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'. As we have been doing for the last several years, we are happy to co-sponsor this resolution, which is traditionally adopted by consensus.

Mr. President,

The successful conclusion of the first Afghan-led Presidential and Provincial Council's elections is a major milestone in Afghanistan's evolution as a democracy. We congratulate President Hamid Karzai on his re-election and express our appreciation to all democratic forces in Afghanistan. I would be remiss if I do not place on record our appreciation for the critical supportive role played by the UN and the international community towards organizing these elections.

India appreciates the resoluteness and determination of the Afghan people who participated in this historic election process, notwithstanding threats and intimidation by the Taliban.

Once a new government assumes office, this would provide us a fresh opportunity for a renewed commitment by the international community towards rebuilding Afghanistan.

While determining the contours of a new compact, we need to assimilate and integrate the experiences drawn from the past compacts. The past compacts, such as those reached in London in January 2006 and Paris in June 2008 placed the responsibility for institution building and governance mainly on the shoulders of the Afghan people and government, without adequately resourcing that effort and eliminating the growing threat from terrorist groups destabilizing the country. This time we need to be mindful of these aspects.

Mr. President,

In the arduous journey for lasting peace and security in Afghanistan, significant challenges lie ahead. First and foremost is the imperative need for security.

The challenge from a resurgent Taliban and Al Qaeda is real, and it is one that threatens us all. Asymmetric warfare and complex terrorist attacks are being mounted in Afghanistan and the well-springs that sustain such terror show no signs of being drained. Civilians, humanitarian personnel, international and UN staff and diplomatic personnel- including our Mission in Kabul have been targeted in terrorist attacks.

There is an increasing recognition that the increase in terrorist actions in Afghanistan is linked to the support and sanctuaries available in the contiguous areas. That explains the particularly high-level of violence in the border areas of Afghanistan. Security and stabilization of Afghanistan will remain a distant goal unless we are able to root out the elements of Al Qaida, Taliban and other terrorist and extremist groups operating from within and outside Afghanistan's borders.

Therefore, in addition to the strengthening of the International Security Assistance Force, it is critical that the Afghan National Security Forces are enlarged and developed in a professional manner, at a much faster pace. They should be provided appropriate resources, combat equipment, and training. We welcome the expansion of their capacities as this is the only viable guarantee for a successful conclusion to military engagement in Afghanistan. We note with appreciation the efforts being made by third countries to strengthen the capacities of the Afghan National Security Forces.

Indeed, there are no quick-fix solutions. In the battle for winning the hearts and minds of ordinary Afghans, we need to guard against the risk of pessimism and defeatism pervading our thought processes. Perseverance and tenacity are critical to handle the challenge posed by Al Qaida, Taliban and other terrorists and extremist groups squarely and effectively.

Mr. President,

This brings us to reconciliation. It requires strategic clarity, unity of purpose, and due recognition of the nature of those with we seek to reconcile with. Without consensus amongst relevant parties over key issues, such as reconciliation with whom and how, we may well be dividing ourselves; not those we seek to “peel away” from terrorist groups. It is for this reason that we must go beyond unworkable divisions between “good” and “bad” Taliban.

Terrorism cannot be compartmentalized. History suggests that facile attempts to strike Faustian bargains with terrorists often result in such forces turning on the very powers that sustained them in the past. Any effort which weakens the authority of the Central Government and its institutions would be counter-productive. We need to be extremely cautious while moving forward on this sensitive issue.

We support the Afghan Government’s determination to integrate those willing to abjure violence and live and work within the parameters of the Afghan Constitution, which provides the framework for a pluralistic and democratic society. This should, of course, go hand-in-hand with the shutting down of support and sanctuaries provided to terrorist groups across the border.

Mr. President

A sustainable strategy for stabilization of Afghanistan must be predicated upon short, medium and long-term strategies to address the development challenge. While the Afghan government should spell out its priorities, the international community should come forward to provide the resources for fulfilling them.

The efforts on the international community in Afghanistan can only be sustained in 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 full ownership of the reconstruction of their country.

Mr. President,

In India's efforts towards stabilization of Afghanistan, the focus has been on development. Stabilizing Afghanistan is not only integrally connected with our own security; it is also connected to the civilizational legacy of our friendship. Our commitment to Afghanistan has now crossed US \$ 1.2 billion. It includes the widest range of activities; from a cold storage plant in Kandahar, to 218 km long Zaranj-Delaram Highway to a power transmission line to Kabul, which has provided round-the-clock electricity supply for the first time since 1992. We are building the Parliament Building- the edifice of democracy while simultaneously targeting community based local projects that provide quick peace dividends, such as schools and hospitals. In all of this, capacity-building is a core element. It is in support of this core task that India has expanded the current allocation of 1000 seats in our institutions for capacity-building and scholarship programmes by 35%.

Turning to the regional aspect, Mr. President, stabilization of Afghanistan must be a central part of regional processes, if it is to regain its role as the crossroads of South, West and Central Asia. This includes regional economic processes, such as SAARC and the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan. These benefit the entire region. Hindering these processes affects Afghanistan and the region as well. We must expand, rather than hinder, trade, transit and transport ties, including overland transit and trade. That is the best way of bringing the regional dimension into play in a positive manner.

Mr. President,

Given the turbulence of the past eight years and the recent dramatic decline in security, there is need for an intensified focus on security, governance and development by the Afghan Government and here the international community should do what it can to assist. Failure in Afghanistan's stabilization will entail a heavy cost for both the Afghan people and the world at large.

When we speak of recommitting ourselves to helping Afghanistan defeat the forces that seek to destroy all that has been achieved since 2001, it is important to recognize that all of us have an abiding interest in the success of this endeavour. What we believe Afghanistan needs is a long-term commitment, even while remaining mindful of the challenges. The Afghan people have displayed resilience and a survival instinct even against the greatest odds. We must do our utmost to support them.

Thank you.

[BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)