



MALAYSIA

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS



CANDIDATE
to the
UNITED NATIONS
SECURITY COUNCIL
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STATEMENT BY
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PERMANENT MISSION OF MALAYSIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

ON AGENDA ITEM 37
THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

AT THE PLENARY OF THE 68TH SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
NEW YORK, 20 NOVEMBER 2013

Mr. President,

On behalf of my delegation I wish to extend our appreciation to the UN Secretary-General for his latest report on the situation in Afghanistan as contained in document A/67/981.

Mr. President,

2. This meeting of the General Assembly is particularly significant as Afghanistan embarks on a milestone year in the history of the country. The year 2014 will witness two crucial developments, namely the Presidential elections and the complete withdrawal of the International Stabilisation Assistance for Afghanistan Force (ISAF). These developments will determine the trajectory of the country for years to come. The Government of Afghanistan has also laid out its vision for the future in its transition agenda up to 2014 to be followed by the ambitious Transformation Decade of 2015 – 2024. Progress is firmly in the hands of the Government of Afghanistan and its people. Nonetheless, that does not mean the international community can merely hold its breath and expect a positive outcome. Rather, we must play an active role in providing assistance and support to ensure that the objectives of the Transformation Decade can be achieved.

3. On the political front, Malaysia is heartened by the positive momentum reported by the Secretary General on preparations for the 2014 Presidential and provincial council elections in Afghanistan. We join the international community in expressing our firm support for these pivotal elections. Malaysia is convinced that a peaceful democratic transfer of power in Afghanistan will provide the Government stability needed for the country's continued progress and development.

4. A smooth political transition in Afghanistan hinges upon a democratic process and outcome that has the confidence of both the people of Afghanistan as well as the international community. We commend the Afghan Government for the various measures taken to ensure that the elections are free, fair and inclusive. Among these measures include the enactment of key legislation designed to strengthen the electoral process and the timely appointment of commissioners to the Independent Election Commission. We hope that preparations for these important elections continue unimpeded according to schedule.

Mr. President,

5. The political development in Afghanistan is taking place against a shifting security landscape, with ISAF scheduled to withdraw by the end of 2014. Malaysia joins other countries in expressing strong confidence in the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), which has assumed full responsibility over security operations in the country in the final phase of the security transition. The transfer of responsibility from ISAF to ANSF is key in reclaiming and strengthening Afghan sovereignty. Nonetheless, it is also imperative that the international community continue to provide the necessary support to ANSF to sustain security efforts before and after the complete withdrawal of ISAF in 2014.

6. On this note, we view with concern the security situation in Afghanistan which is still recording an alarming number of civilian casualties due to terrorist and insurgent attacks. Malaysia condemns the continuing attacks on innocent civilians, particularly women and children, who can never be considered legitimate targets under international humanitarian law. At the same time, international forces in Afghanistan must take every care to prevent civilian casualties in their military operations as such incidences only deepen resentment and distrust against the present security forces. In this regard, it is vital to ensure accountability where such incidences are reported. The international community must refrain from giving any reason to the Afghan people to turn away from the transition process.

Mr. President,

7. On a related note, Malaysia sees ongoing reconciliation efforts as a vital component in securing lasting peace and stability. We support the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP) and the progress it has made in rehabilitating and reintegrating former insurgents into the community. We stress that the national reconciliation and reintegration process must remain Afghan-led and Afghan-owned. At the same time, we encourage and support Afghanistan's close engagement with neighbouring countries, regional partners and the international community at large in order to tackle the root causes of insurgency, including discontent borne from the lack of economic opportunity or inequitable development.

Mr. President,

8. Malaysia reiterates its view that Afghanistan would benefit enormously from the inclusion and contribution of women in the political, economic and social spheres. We support the ongoing efforts of the Government of Afghanistan to strengthen the protection, participation and empowerment of women. However, the continued targeting of women in high-profile Government positions is a cause for great concern. We urge the Government of Afghanistan to take stringent measures to ensure the safety and protection of women serving the Government as well as enhance safeguards for women in the community.

9. We recognize that it takes time to change perceptions and entrenched stereotypical values but sincerely believe that the results are well worth the effort. We also understand the need to take into account religious, cultural and traditional sensitivities in furthering the rights of women, which is a balance that Malaysia has worked to achieve. In this regard, Malaysia is willing to share our experience in enhancing the involvement and development of women in all facets of life in accordance with Islamic principles.

Mr. President,

10. Malaysia appreciates the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in cooperation with the Government of Afghanistan in laying down the foundations for sustainable development and peace in the country.

11. Malaysia is also firmly supportive of the various regional and multilateral fora that focus on Afghanistan which provide further avenues for engagement between Afghanistan and the international community. We participate actively in the tri-annual meetings of the International Contact Group on Afghanistan and Pakistan (ICG), most recently held in New York in September 2013, in which the Group collectively underscored the importance of the roles played by the UN, regional partners and the larger international community in Afghanistan's future. We also recall the successful Tokyo Conference last year, during which the international community made generous pledges in development aid for Afghanistan, and welcome the follow-up meeting of senior officials in July 2013. My delegation hopes that all parties will honour their commitments under this framework in order to allow for the continued progress and development of the country.

12. On our part, Mr. President, Malaysia stands ready to support Afghanistan in its rebuilding efforts. The Malaysian Armed Forces Medical Contingent (MALCON) stationed in the Bamyán Province extended much-needed medical, dentistry and healthcare services to the Afghan people from July 2010 until April 2013. We are willing to explore further ways in which we can continue to provide humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. Malaysia will also continue to provide opportunities for capacity building and human resource development to Afghanistan through bilateral technical training programmes, such as the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP) in

various fields. We are ready to work with the Afghan Government to identify areas of training we can provide which are most relevant for its developmental needs.

Mr. President,

13. To conclude, the gains made in Afghanistan on the political, economic and social spheres must be further strengthened towards lasting peace, stability and growth. The international community has resoundingly united behind Afghanistan and we must sustain our efforts to ensure that Afghanistan receives the backing it needs to achieve the noble aspirations it has set for itself as a nation. In this regard, Malaysia continues to stand with the international community in support of Afghanistan through 2014 and beyond.

I thank you, Mr. President.