



Permanent Mission of
Malaysia
to the United Nations

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STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. HAMIDON ALI, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAYSIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 17: THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN, AT THE PLENARY OF THE 63RD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, NEW YORK, 10 NOVEMBER 2008.

Mr. President,

Let me first of all extend my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on the situation in Afghanistan as contained in Document A/62/345. The report provides useful observations on efforts at bringing peace, security and stability to Afghanistan.

2. We also extend our appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Afghanistan, Mr. Kai Eide, for his valuable work, and to members of UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their dedication in carrying out their responsibilities despite the difficult and challenging environment.

3. We also congratulate the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for the successful launch of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) during the Paris Conference on 12 Jun 2008, which together with the pledged support of the international community during the conference provide the road map and means for national effort to bring long-term security and prosperity to Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

4. My delegation takes note of the Secretary-General's overall assessment that Afghanistan is facing ever more challenging situation. We note with deep concern the marked deterioration of the security situation resulting from insurgent attacks that are spreading into more sensitive areas, and their deployment of asymmetrical tactics in the attacks. The increasing violence is a matter of concern for all as security is the major enabler for implementing the urgently needed humanitarian relief works and the long-term success of the reconstruction and socio-economic development in the country. The actions by the insurgence would definitely retard efforts by the Government towards bringing much needed development in these areas.

5. Related to this, we are deeply concerned with the high number of civilian casualties, which by any means is unacceptable. In the first eight months of 2008 alone, we note that UNAMA recorded 1,445 civilian deaths, which represents a 39 percent

increase over the same period last year. We condemn the cowardly terrorist acts perpetrated by the insurgents and other extremist groups that wilfully target civilian population including on humanitarian aid workers.

6. We are equally concerned at the civilian casualties consequent to military actions by pro-government forces. We note from the report that during the first eight month period of 2008, 393 deaths or 27 percent of civilian deaths were attributed to air strikes by pro-government forces. We share the same view of the Secretary-General that civilians should be protected at all times from any form of danger particularly from fatal injuries or death, not only from terrorist act and insurgency but also from unintentional consequence of pro-government military operations. We therefore call and urge all parties to ensure the protection of these civilians as required under international humanitarian and human rights laws. We also call on the relevant authorities concerned to continually review their rules of engagement and procedures in this regard to ensure the protection of civilian lives

Mr. President,

7. Another issue of concern is the narcotics situation in Afghanistan in view of the nexus between the drug trade and the activities of the insurgents and criminal groups that finance terrorism and corruptions. My delegation is encouraged by the reported decrease albeit modest, in both the poppy cultivation area and opium production. We note that opium production is now confined to only seven provinces where the insurgents remain very active from out of a total of thirty four provinces in Afghanistan.

8. With regard to counter-narcotics efforts, we recognise the monumental task for Afghanistan to eradicate the drug trade in view of the insurgency and the task of providing alternative livelihood to poppy growers. On top of that counter-narcotics officials and enforcers are constantly threatened and intimidated by corrupt officials and traffickers. From the report, some 77 members of the eradication force were killed this year, a six fold increase over the last year. While efforts appear to be taken at the country level, to further ensure success in the counter-narcotic efforts in Afghanistan, the international community also need to equally curtail the demand side of the opium trade in Afghanistan including by reinvigorating international effort to clamp down on the drug route going out of Afghanistan. The adoption of the Security Council Resolution to curtail the diversion and trafficking of precursors from exporting countries to Afghanistan and neighbouring countries if implemented thoroughly should contribute towards counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

9. Security challenges in Afghanistan are as much the cause as well as the result of the socio-political situation in the country. The resolution of the situation would require an integrated and concerted civilian and military approach. Military actions alone would not be sufficient to overcome the root causes of the problem. At the same time the government should also further improve its delivery system, good-governance and

respect for human rights, to foster the credibility and galvanise support for the government. Furthermore, an all-inclusive national reconciliation process is needed to avoid the marginalisation of any groups. My delegation is encouraged by the efforts undertaken by the Afghan government in this direction.

Mr. President,

10. For far too long now Afghanistan has been saddled with many daunting challenges which has placed them in a very precarious situation. The time should come soon for Afghanistan to be elevated from this hardship which will be made possible with the continued support and assistance from the international community. On the part of Malaysia, we reiterate our commitment to cooperate and work closely with Afghanistan and where appropriate, with other members of the international community. We will continue to extend assistance to Afghanistan under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP) to develop the much needed human capital in various fields for Afghanistan's development.

Thank you, Mr. President.