



STATEMENT BY MR. NIRUPAM SEN, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, ON
AFGHANISTAN AT THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON DECEMBER 07, 2006

Mr. President,

Let me begin by congratulating you on assuming the Presidency of the Security Council for this month. This discussion is timely, coming as it does in the midst of heightened international focus on Afghanistan and the surrounding region.

Any discussion on Afghanistan must begin from the central premise that the international community retains an abiding responsibility to assist Afghanistan in consolidating democratic governance, peace and stability, long-term employment-led development, while in the interim delivering humanitarian assistance. Our views are set in this context.

Mr. President,

We have carefully read the report of the Security Council Mission, and the earlier report of the Secretary General on the situation in Afghanistan. We share the Mission's positive assessment of the achievements of the Government of President Karzai, and the people of Afghanistan over the last five years. The establishment of genuinely democratically-elected representative institutions, sustained economic growth as well as growing trade and economic cooperation, investment in core infrastructure projects and the implementation of education, health and rural development programmes are praiseworthy, particularly as these were achieved in the face of adversity. At the same time, the support of the international community has been substantial and fairly consistent. India is happy to continue playing a role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, given our historic ties with the Afghan people.

Mr. President, there is no doubt that the most pressing task before us is to overcome the challenge of insecurity. We have heard several arguments suggesting that the lack of effective governance in Afghanistan, widespread corruption, the inefficiency of the police service, the growing narcotics trade, continued warlordism in the provinces—all of this contributes to the security problem. All of this may well be true, but to focus on

these as the cause of security problems is to miss the point. These are factors which thrive on insecurity and serve to exacerbate it. They are not causes of insecurity: instead, it is the revival of the Taliban, Al-Qaeda and other extremist groups, and the existence of cross-border safe havens for such groups, that are the real cause of insecurity. While focusing on rebuilding and strengthening Afghan state institutions, the roots of insecurity should not be forgotten. The Report refers to Operation Medusa. Operation Medusa has not even contained, let alone eliminated, Medusa. The snakes are still swirling because of the cross border dimension. This reinforces the importance of this aspect. Historical experience shows that, without addressing this, attempts at stability and security would be unavailing. It is important to confront and not strike deals with the Taliban – which, to continue the Greek mythological metaphor, is tantamount to contenting oneself with looking at her image in the shield, without striking at Medusa.

Mr. President,

While the report of the Council Mission suggests that “insurgency” is largely confined to one-third of Afghanistan, the situation remains precarious. ISAF’s own statistics show that in recent months, security incidents have escalated by as much as 70% and 50% in Paktika and Khost provinces. Therefore, it is not clear that efforts to negotiate peace in the more troubled Afghan provinces are succeeding; indeed, terrorist violence spreading elsewhere may suggest the opposite. Moreover, the growing incidence of suicide bombings shows the increasing spread of an ideology and tactics typical of the Al-Qaeda, which are not part of the Afghan cultural and religious tradition. Therefore, we believe that the cost of tolerating the spiraling violence is infinitely higher than any costs we might bear in quelling it through firm law enforcement action. The consequences of collective inaction may well be borne by the international community in general, but will certainly be borne by the states of the region in particular.

Mr President,

It is in this context that India emphasizes the need to simultaneously implement firm and effective law enforcement measures, security sector reform programmes, capacity-building measures, and regional cooperation in all fields. Similarly, the growth of representative political parties and the broad-basing of the culture of democratic political activism are developments that should be fostered since these also help in checking terrorism. All of these contribute to the effort to create credible and sustained opportunities to build upon the growing constituency for peace in Afghanistan and across the region. Nevertheless, these must be accompanied by firm measures to enforce peace.

It was therefore fortuitous that the Security Council Mission visited our region a few days prior to the Second Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan,

which India had the honour to host jointly with our Afghan brothers in New Delhi last month. The regional dimension is explicitly recognized in the report of the Mission, in context of finding ways to help Afghanistan overcome the challenges before it.

Indeed, the New Delhi Declaration of the Second Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan notes that a "strategy for development for Afghanistan which is based on cooperation with regional countries, creates significant possibilities for reducing poverty and for achieving the Afghanistan Compact benchmarks and Millennium Development Goals in the entire region". Towards this end, it outlines a number of useful suggestions for the countries of the region to coordinate policies for exploiting shared resources like water, agriculture and energy; to develop capacity-building programmes; and to expand trade and transport linkages; to design and build appropriate regional projects.

Similarly, we believe that more work needs to be done to reverse the expansion of narcotics production. Not only is it necessary to implement policies to stop cultivation, it is also important to focus on simultaneously implementing crop substitution programmes and improving border management mechanisms. It will take a coordinated effort by the Government and people of Afghanistan, as well as regional players, to effectively address this particular challenge.

Mr. President,

India's support for a sovereign, stable, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan is consistent and well-known. We see a resurgent, stable, sovereign and peaceful Afghanistan as an essential element in the emerging mosaic of regional cooperation underpinning our world. It is also part of a process that reclaims for the people of Afghanistan their rightful place in our collective future. Afghanistan's entry into the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation at its last Summit in Dhaka was a manifestation of this. We believe that Afghanistan can and must be provided with the means to re-establish itself as the crossroads of Asia, and as one of the future transport hubs and energy bridges of our region.

In conclusion, let me also reiterate our firm commitment to our partnership with Afghanistan, which today covers a multidimensional cooperation programme that harmonizes with the priorities of the Afghan Government. Not only have we extended financial assistance in excess of US \$ 650 million to fund infrastructure projects and to assist with the National Budget process, we are also expanding our involvement in the capacity building process, both through traditional training programmes and through innovative public-private partnerships that involve our apex Chambers of Commerce and Industry. Thus, our assistance spans the range of activity, from basic infrastructure such as roads, power, dams, and telecom to rapidly implemented, community-based small-scale projects, and training and capacity-building programmes. To summarize our approach, we seek to help Afghanistan create the

infrastructure of a modern state while, at the same time, going beyond monetary assistance to provide the Afghan people the wherewithal to help themselves.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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