

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ASOKE KUMAR MUKERJI,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, ON UNITED NATIONS
SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE ON 'SITUATION IN
AFGHANISTAN' ON DECEMBER 17, 2013

Mr. President,

At the outset, let me thank you for organizing this debate on the 'Situation in Afghanistan'. I avail this opportunity to thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin for his statement. We also thank UNSRSG Jan Kubis for his inputs.

Mr. President,

Let me begin by expressing our concern with the attacks in Afghanistan's Uruzgan province on 26 November and in the Faryab province on 27 November, which resulted in the death of nine development workers. We are pained that this attack has brought the number of attacks against humanitarian personnel, facilities and assets in Afghanistan to 237 so far this year. All this points to the fact that the main threat to security in Afghanistan is terrorism being perpetrated by those who do not want to see a strong stable prosperous Afghanistan.

We note that progress has been made in the finalization of the candidates for the Presidential and the provincial elections due in 2014. This is a significant step during a period of Afghanistan's transition which encompasses security, political and economic dimensions. I would like to reiterate that the key to successful elections in 2014 is a process whose outcome is acceptable to the people of Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

The events preceding the Presidential elections are extremely important as they would bring to the political discourse issues which are close to the heart of Afghan people. This would impact on the political reconstruction effort in Afghanistan which must always

remain Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and 'Afghan-Controlled'. At this juncture, the support of the international community for the Afghan authorities' electoral preparations is critical. We must also be vigilant towards any efforts to derail the process and this would certainly include strengthening the security apparatus.

Mr. President,

The security situation in Afghanistan remains under threat from terrorism. The report of the Secretary General mentions that during the first ten months of 2013, there were 7,394 civilian casualties - a 13 per cent rise compared to the same period in 2012. Three-quarters of these casualties were attributed to attacks by anti-Government elements. It is also noteworthy that the use of improvised explosive devices, including in complex and suicide attacks, accounted for 49 per cent of these casualties and remains the biggest threat to civilians. There are forces active to derail the process of reconstruction. Here, I would like to reiterate that India would be undeterred by these cowardly acts of violence. We do not have an "exit policy" in Afghanistan and I would like to emphasize our commitment to stand by the Afghan people and their servicemen who have shown exemplary courage in protecting the Afghan people.

Mr. President,

The internal security situation has been hostage to the terrorist attacks originating from beyond Afghanistan's border by groups closely allied to the Al Qaida and their affiliates. We would like to reinforce that we must be continuously watchful of the designs of these terrorist organizations. In this regard, concerted action is also needed to isolate and root out the syndicate of terrorism, which includes elements of the Taliban, Al-Qaida, Lashkar-e-Taiba and other terrorist and extremist groups. In order to have a smooth transition security plan, It is therefore extremely important that the drawdown of troops and its implication on the security arrangements is carefully assessed and appropriate measures need to be taken to ensure the safety of the Afghan people. I note that the Secretary General has mentioned the twelfth annual trilateral meeting of Foreign Ministers of Russia, India and China on 10 November 2013 which emphasized the need for continuing international support to and greater regional integration with Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

We also note the recent announcement of record levels of poppy cultivation and opium production. The Secretary General's report rightly mentions that it is a critical hazard to the security, well-being and development of Afghanistan and the wider region. This aspect must not be neglected.

Mr. President,

In view to the efforts of the international community to have an Afghan-led process of transition, the time has come for the international community to re-assess the role it wishes to play. I would suggest that we need to discuss the issue of mandate of UNAMA. Afghanistan has reached a considerable level of political maturity with the ongoing political reconstruction efforts. There is no doubt that UNAMA has played an exceptional role over the last decade in the political, humanitarian and development spheres in Afghanistan along with other agencies of the UN system. However, I would like to mention that in view of the maturity of the process in Afghanistan, the international community may wish to define UNAMA's political mandate in light of the changed circumstances. The new mandate of UNAMA should help to keep its focus on supporting the political institutions rather than attempting to influence the political process itself, which must be left entirely to Afghanistan's own leaders.

Mr. President,

Talking of UNAMA's role, we also believe that UNAMA must step-up its humanitarian and developmental role through better delivery of assistance in Afghanistan, since the UN is uniquely placed with access to the remotest and most isolated communities in the country. We must also not forget that it is not capacity 'substitution' but 'capacity building' that we are seeking to achieve in Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

The future role of UNAMA needs to be discussed so that it plays an effective role keeping in mind the overall objective of the transition

process. In doing so we must take into account problems of coherence, the duplication of efforts and the resulting higher cost of programs.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, I would like to say that as we enter a new year, we should be hopeful that Afghanistan would be taking definite strides towards a new era of development and progress. India sincerely believes that the huge efforts of the Afghan people and the international community that has gone into the process of transition would provide a solid basis for a stable future. We would like to assure that India will stand by the people of Afghanistan in all its endeavours. We reiterate our support to the efforts of the international community leading towards a peaceful, prosperous and stable Afghanistan.

Thank you.

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