

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR MANJEEV SINGH PURI, CHARGE 'D AFFAIRS, ON THE  
SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN AT THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL ON  
DECEMBER 19, 2011

At the outset, Mr. President, I would like to thank you for scheduling today's debate on the situation in Afghanistan. I welcome H.E. Mr. Jawed Ludin, Deputy Foreign Minister of Afghanistan to the Security Council and thank him for his comprehensive statement. We also thank the UNSG for his latest report and are appreciative of the briefings by Under Secretary General Herve Ladsous and Mr. Staffan de Mistura. I would like to thank Mr de Mistura for his services at the head of UNAMA and wish him well in his new appointment.

Mr. President,

We are pleased that the Bonn Conference was well attended, and we would like to congratulate the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for their outstanding Chairmanship and thank Germany for hosting this important Conference.

Coming close on the heels of the Istanbul Conference that provided a new impetus to regional cooperation, the Bonn Conference provided an opportunity to comprehensively review the developments in Afghanistan during the last one decade and to chart out the collective vision of the international community for the future. The outcome, as embodied in the Bonn Conference Conclusions, is an expression of international community's determination and political commitment to sustained long-term engagement with Afghanistan.

To realize this vision, we need to back up our commitments with both resources and actions.

As the Afghan Government assumes full ownership, it will also need support for economic development. We hope that the upcoming conferences in 2012, the Chicago conference in May on security, the Kabul conference in June on regional cooperation, and the Tokyo conference in July on development, will ensure the continued engagement of the international community in Afghanistan's growth.

Mr. President,

Afghanistan today faces at least four deficits: a security deficit, a governance deficit, a development deficit, and an investment deficit. Afghanistan will require enormous assistance for a long time if it is to address these four deficits adequately.

There is a real danger that as international forces withdraw from a combat role and in numbers, there will be a transition 'recession', i.e. attention and aid will decline, just as the Afghan government's security demands increase.

It is important that we draw the right lessons from our past mistakes and should not let Afghanistan slip back. We need to avert the possibility that Afghanistan is let down or made to feel abandoned by a withdrawal of assistance, both in terms of quantity and quality of international assistance, post-2014. We must ensure that Afghanistan's security is ensured through non-interference in its internal affairs.

Mr. President,

Concerted international and regional efforts are imperative for laying the foundations of lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan. It is important that the ongoing transition must remain Afghan owned, the transition must be carried out in a systematic manner taking into account the ground realities, the transition must be multi-faceted and should ensure the protection and promotion of the human rights of all Afghans and lead to strengthening of the Afghan state and its institutions.

First and foremost, Afghanistan needs assistance and support to build its capacity to tackle the critical challenges of terrorism, including suicide terrorism, the religious extremism that fuels it, and the drug trafficking that sustains it.

We are seriously concerned that the insurgency remains resilient. There has been no let up in terrorist violence and the security gains are still tenuous. Besides the targeting of high profile political and public figures, innocent civilians have been repeatedly targeted by Taliban even on solemn and auspicious occasions.

As we have repeatedly highlighted, terrorism finds sustenance and support from a dangerous osmosis of ideologies, ambitions, training and operations among the syndicate of terrorism in the region with suicide terrorism as its main technique, and targets not limited to Afghanistan.

We need concerted action to isolate and root out the syndicate of terrorism which includes elements of the Al Qaida, Taliban, Laskar-e-Taiba and other terrorist and extremist groups operating mainly from outside Afghanistan's borders. These groups are ideologically and operationally fused and their bonds have strengthened over the years. We need resolute determination and political will to firmly deal with safe havens for terrorist groups outside Afghanistan's borders in the region.

Our vision for the period of transition must also take into account the conditions on the ground and the capacity of Afghanistan's security forces to preserve sovereignty, independence and the integrity of their nation. We support further strengthening of the Afghan National Security Forces and this must go hand-in-hand with strengthening of their training and equipping, financing and development of their capabilities beyond the transition period.

Besides security, we also need concomitant progress on the developmental front. This requires market access, foreign investment, and a coherent international economic strategy for Afghanistan. It also implies greater coordination and further streamlining of

international community's development-related efforts, including aligning of assistance with Afghan national priorities.

Mr President,

India has age-old historical, cultural, civilizational and economic ties with neighbouring Afghanistan. During the last decade, our relationship has been renewed and consolidated by our contribution to the rebuilding and reconstruction of Afghanistan.

India fully supports a genuinely Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-driven peace and reconciliation process as opposed to an internationally-led process, accompanied by an inclusive political process and intra-Afghan dialogue with those who renounce violence, cut off ties to terrorist groups, abide by the Afghan constitution and are committed to protection for human rights, including the rights of women.

India believes in a strong, independent, sovereign, stable, united, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan at peace with itself and its neighbours. Recent history has shown that an end to Afghanistan's suffering requires an end to external interference in its internal affairs.

India has pledged up to US \$ 2 billion in development and humanitarian assistance, and signed a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement with Afghanistan in October this year looking at 2014 and beyond. The Agreement creates an institutional framework for our future cooperation in the fields of political and security issues, trade and economy, capacity building and education, and social, cultural, civil society and people-to-people relations.

We offer our growing market to Afghanistan's products. Last month, India announced the virtual elimination of sensitive lists affecting exports of all least developed SAARC countries to India.

India is assisting Afghanistan in building an Agricultural University to tap the potential in Agriculture in Afghanistan. We have extended our assistance to Afghanistan for capacity building; increased the number of civil scholarships offered to Afghanistan to enable more students from Afghanistan get requisite training in art, culture and technology among other areas to further the process of nation building in Afghanistan.

We are also prepared to make long-term investments in Afghanistan. Indian companies are willing to invest up to US \$ 10 billion in mining and setting up a steel plant and related infrastructure in Afghanistan. Recently, an Indian consortium has been awarded the bid for three blocks of the Hajigak iron ore reserves by the Government of Afghanistan.

These are concrete manifestations of our long-term political commitment to Afghanistan. If others do the same, we could set off a virtuous cycle of healthy economic development in Afghanistan that benefits Afghanistan and the region and,

indeed, set off, as President Karzai has called it, a cooperative rather than competitive 'Great Game' in the region.

Afghanistan's growth strategy is built upon the country's comparative advantage of abundant natural resources and its strategic geographical location. We see Afghanistan as a hub linking Middle East/ West Asia, Central and South Asia through trade and transit routes, railways and highways, energy pipelines and electricity networks, economic projects and cross-investments. It is our expectation that this cooperation would not only be at the inter-governmental level, but would also involve civil society and business as stakeholders.

Mr. President,

The greatest need today is for the Afghan people to have peace and stability. They deserve to live in peace and decide their future themselves, without outside interference, coercion and intimidation. All countries of the region must work to facilitate this.

The international community as a whole needs to work with renewed vigour and unity of purpose towards strengthening efforts of the Afghan government in seeking solutions that are inclusive and led by the Afghan people themselves.

In conclusion, Mr President, let me reiterate that India appreciates and supports the good work being done by UNAMA. I would also like to welcome new SRSJ Jan Kubis and assure him of our full support.

Thank you.

BACK TO SECURITY COUNCIL