
**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. HARDEEP SINGH PURI, PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF INDIA TO THE UN IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON
THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN IN NEW YORK ON JUNE 30, 2009**

Mr. President,

Thank you for scheduling today's debate on the situation in Afghanistan. This is of immediate and abiding interest for India, as a close neighbour and civilizational partner of Afghanistan.

Mr President,

India welcomes the positive perspective reflected in the UNSG's report and the briefing by SRSG Eide regarding the three interlinked strategic shifts in Afghanistan.

For India, the litmus test of cost-effective investment in assistance programmes is to ensure that these are aligned closely with Afghan priorities, and that they contribute to capacity-building.

We endorse the UNSG's exhortation to the international community to maintain its broad and multinational presence. This is indeed not the time to reduce our efforts, but to enhance them in a coordinated manner. This has been our consistent position, even in the dark days of the attack on our Embassy in Kabul last July.

The UNSG's report is a clear riposte to the voices questioning the utility of our collective effort. In response, we must stand behind the "civilian surge" and the expansion of Afghan capacity, both in word and deed.

That implies strongly supporting priority areas identified by our Afghan partners, including agriculture, energy, private sector development, and capacity-building. JCMB XI took useful decisions in this regard.

We must also support the expansion of the UN presence—undertaken at our collective exhortation—financially and administratively.

At the same time, organizational difficulties and political debates notwithstanding, the second national and Presidential election since 2001 should be more of a cause for satisfaction.

We recognize that there are calls for to ensure that the elections are free and fair. Naturally, elections need a level playing field. But let us recognize that vibrant political debate is itself a hopeful sign. Energetic debates do not always imply the unravelling of the political process. We need also to be mindful that too much external advice often acts conversely and undermines domestic institutions.

From all these standpoints, the moment has come for us to more vocally recognize and support growing Afghan capacities. Too much time has been spent berating Afghan actors for various failings, instead of placing them in the correct perspective: establishing a modern government after decades of war, displacement and privation was never going to be an easy task. We must no longer continue to miss the woods for the trees.

Mr President,

On the negative side, the security situation remains deeply worrying. It does not take much foresight to predict that the coming six months will be difficult, most of all, for the Afghan people.

Assymetric warfare and complex terrorist attacks are being mounted and the well-springs that sustain such terror show no signs of being drained. We need to ponder deeply over how best this can be achieved.

In this context, we continue to have reservations regarding the language used in UN reports to describe terrorist attacks. Surely such operations are not being mounted by "anti-government elements" or "insurgents".

We welcome the progress recorded by the Afghan National Army, especially as the expansion of ANA capacity is the only viable guarantee of a successful conclusion to military engagement in Afghanistan. We note with appreciation the efforts being made by third countries to strengthen ANA capacities.

Mr President,

This brings me to reconciliation. While this is often a corollary of military strategies, in Afghanistan, this is a matter that requires great caution.

Successive reports of the UNSG, and resolutions here and in the UNGA, have underscored that this should be an Afghan-led process, within the parameters of the Constitution of the land. It has also be been reiterated that this must be pursued from a position of strength.

We must consider if we are at this juncture as yet.

Reconciliation requires strategic clarity, unity of purpose, and due recognition of the nature of those with we seek to reconcile with.

Without consensus amongst relevant parties over key issues, such as reconciliation with whom and how, we may well be dividing ourselves; not those we seek to “peel away” from terrorist groups.

It is for this reason that we must go beyond unworkable divisions between “good” and “bad” Taliban. We have equally to be mindful that in pursuing these distinctions we are projecting impressions of weakness, desperation or a defeatist mentality.

Mr President,

I should like to reaffirm our unswerving commitment to helping our Afghan partners to the fullest extent of our capabilities.

Stabilizing Afghanistan is not only integrally connected with our own security, it is also connected to the civilizational legacy of our friendship.

That is why attacks upon our people and symbols of our friendship only serve to outrage us and redouble our commitment to Afghanistan.

Our commitment to Afghanistan has now crossed US \$ 1.2 billion. It includes the widest range of activities; from a cold storage plant in Kandahar to a power transmission line to Kabul. We are building the Parliament Building, while simultaneously targeting community based local projects that provide quick peace dividends, such as schools and hospitals.

In all of this, capacity-building is a core element. It is in support of this core task that India has expanded the current allocation of 1000 seats in our institutions for capacity-building and scholarship programmes by 35%.

Turning to the regional aspect, Mr President, stabilization of Afghanistan must be a central part of regional processes, if it is to regain its role as the crossroads of South, West and Central Asia.

This includes regional economic processes, such as SAARC and the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan. These benefit the entire region.

Hindering these processes affects Afghanistan, and the region as well. We must expand, rather than hinder, trade, transit and transport ties, including overland transit and trade. That is the best way of bringing the regional dimension into play in a positive manner.

Mr President,

In conclusion, we note the UNSG’s commitment to provide us with benchmarks of progress in his next report. It is a good step especially if these are result-based

rather than timeline based. We look forward to participating in the discussion on these benchmarks, with the full ownership of the Government of Afghanistan.

I thank you Mr President.

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