

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR HARDEEP SINGH PURI, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
AT THE SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE ON ‘SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN’ ON
DECEMBER 19, 2012**

Mr. President, I join others in thanking you for scheduling today’s debate on the situation in Afghanistan. I thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan for his statement. I would also thank the UN Secretary General for his latest report, and we are particularly appreciative of the briefing by Mr. Ján Kubiš, UNSG’s Special Representative for Afghanistan.

Mr. President, As the year 2012 draws down, today’s debate provides us an opportunity for a stocktaking of the collective efforts of the international community in Afghanistan. An overview would indicate that the international community and Afghanistan have achieved important milestones this year on the long road towards peace, progress and security in the country.

At major international conferences in Bonn, Chicago and Tokyo and at the regional level in Istanbul and Kabul, the international community has renewed its commitment for peace, security and development in Afghanistan. The realization of commitments flowing from the Tokyo Conference is essential for Afghanistan’s fiscal sustainability and its quest for self-reliance.

The regional cooperation aspect has also received a new momentum under the Istanbul “Heart of Asia” process and other regional processes. The Delhi Investment Summit of June 28 hosted by India was an important endeavour in focussing regional and international attention towards investments in Afghanistan and their potential in providing economic development and stability to Afghanistan during the transition period.

As Afghanistan looks forward to holding simultaneous Presidential and Provincial elections in April, 2014, it would be another important step in consolidation of the democracy in Afghanistan.

Amidst these salient developments, Afghanistan continues to face an existential threat from terrorism. The infrastructure of terror is still intact in the region drawing upon ideological, financial and logistical support from beyond its borders. The syndicate of terrorism which includes elements of the Al-Qaida, Taliban, Lashkar-e-Taiba and other terrorist and extremist groups, is active in the region and is far from being isolated. While the security situation continues to remain fragile, ISAF draw down has proceeded apace. This has accentuated the uncertainties with the risk of creating a security vacuum coupled with an economic downturn in Afghanistan, which could undermine the hard fought gains we have achieved together during the last

decade. The security transition must ensure lasting peace and security for all sections of Afghan society.

We have renewed the mandate of the 1988 and 1267/1989 sanctions regimes just two days ago. In the functioning of these sanctions regimes, it is important to ensure that the fight against terrorism should not be diluted. The linkages between Al-Qaida and Taliban are real and cannot be wished away. The recently adopted Security Council resolutions clearly recognize this aspect and have tasked the Monitoring Team to report periodically on this matter.

Mr. President, As Afghanistan takes forward the task of national reconciliation in accordance with the criteria as laid forth in the Kabul communiqué, we fully support the efforts for regional confidence-building as a critical component of international efforts to support the country.

Regional cooperation and connectivity are critical for Afghanistan's political and economic progress. We are fully cognizant that the economic viability of Afghanistan depends on its fuller integration into the neighbourhood, so that it can regain its historical role of a land-bridge between South Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East and Eurasia. Conscious of this imperative need, India has taken the lead in two commercial Confidence Building Measures under the Istanbul process.

Mr. President, Afghanistan and India have had a long shared history going back over millennia. The two countries are natural strategic partners by virtue of geography and a common vision of peace and cooperation in the region.

President Karzai's visit to India last month offered us an opportunity to review the entire gamut of bilateral relationship and discuss regional and international issues of mutual interest. During the visit, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh reiterated India's support to Afghanistan during the crucial period of transition till end 2014 and thereafter.

The implementation of the Strategic Partnership Agreement of October, 2011 between the two countries has already been set in motion with the convening of the first meeting of the Partnership Council on May 1 this year.

During the last decade, India has pledged up to \$ 2 billion in development and humanitarian assistance. We have managed to carry out some of the most economical and cost-effective projects in Afghanistan. The \$ 500 million assistance announced by the Prime Minister of India in May 2011 is being spent from 2012-2015. The projects under consideration will be in line with the projects suggested under the National Priority Programmes of the Government of Afghanistan. The pace and nature of the utilization of the present and future Indian assistance will be determined by the preference, comfort level and absorptive capacity of the Afghan government.

Mr. President, India remains unwavering in its commitment to assisting the people of Afghanistan in their endeavour to build a peaceful, stable, democratic and prosperous nation.

We support the good work done by UNAMA. As we enter in the New Year, we must create an enabling environment where the Afghan people could live in peace and security and decide their future themselves, without outside interference, coercion and intimidation. We need to impart added momentum to our efforts for strengthening the Afghan government's capacity for security, governance and economic development. The international community must continue 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.

I thank you.

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