

STATEMENT BY DR. KAKOLI GHOSH DASTIDAR, MEMBER OF PARLAIMENT, ON THE
SITUATION IN AFGAHNISTAN AT THE 65TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL
ASSEMBLY ON NOVEMEBR 04, 2010

Mr. President,

At the outset, I would like to express India's appreciation for scheduling this discussion on a subject of great significance for us, our region and the world. I also commend the German delegation for coordinating inter-governmental negotiations in an excellent manner that has led us to this annual General Assembly resolution on the "Situation in Afghanistan".



As we have been doing for the last several years, we are happy to co-sponsor this resolution, which is traditionally adopted by consensus.

Mr. President,

The efforts of the international community in Afghanistan have increasingly focused on security, development, governance and regional and international cooperation issues with the overall objective of the Afghan government eventually assuming full responsibility and taking charge of Afghanistan's destiny. There have been significant political developments during this year including the London Conference, the Kabul Conference and the Parliamentary elections.

The Kabul Conference marked a new phase in the partnership of the Afghan Government and international community - the *Kabul Process* and a renewed commitment to a secure, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan. The Conference demonstrated Afghan Government's determination to take full responsibility for Afghanistan's own development, security and governance, and the international community's willingness to realign international assistance in accordance with Afghanistan's priorities and action plans. The success of *Kabul Process* largely depends on detailing and implementing the commitments flowing from the Kabul Conference.

Tangible and sustained improvements on the security front are a prerequisite for realizing these shared goals. Indeed, improved security could create an enabling environment for an accelerated progress on development and governance issues. This is also critical in expanding the footprint of the Afghan Government and ensuring the greater ownership of these processes by the Afghan people. For these processes to be enduring, Afghan ownership should go hand-in-hand with Afghan leadership.

The holding of national assembly elections on September 18, 2010 was an important step forward in strengthening the democratic framework in Afghanistan. India appreciates the resoluteness and determination of the Afghan people who participated in these elections, notwithstanding threats and intimidation by the Taliban. I would be remiss if I do not place on record our appreciation for the Afghan Government's lead role and the critical supportive role played by the UN and the international community towards organizing these elections.

Mr. President,

India's relationship with Afghanistan is multi-faceted characterized by civilizational, trade and cultural exchanges stretching back to antiquity.

India is committed to the unity, integrity and independence of Afghanistan underpinned by democracy and cohesive pluralism and free from external interference. India has contributed to these goals through our Development Partnership which is implemented entirely in accordance with the priorities of the Afghan Government and people. Our Assistance programmes are spread all over Afghanistan and cover all sectors of development: humanitarian, infrastructural, institution and capacity building, small-scale quick gestation

projects, and agriculture. The ultimate aim of our assistance, which presently stands at over US\$ 1.3 bn, is to strengthen the capacity of the Afghan state and people to stand on their own feet in the areas of governance and services for the Afghan people.

Turning to the regional aspect, Mr. President, Afghanistan's stability and economic development depend a lot on its neighbours and the region as a whole. Afghanistan's greatest economic potential perhaps resides in its immense potential as a trade, transport and energy hub, and as a bridge linking Central, West, South Asia and the Gulf. Its prosperity also depends on the consumer market of nearly 1.5 billion people in the South-Asian sub-continent.

However, for this to materialize, Afghanistan's neighbours need to come together to forge greater regional cooperation and facilitate trade and transit. 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.

Growing economic inter-dependence will also help in weaning disaffected youth away from insurgency and militancy and in creating a zone of co-prosperity in the region. We support the wishes of the Government of Afghanistan to take the lead in this direction.

Mr. President,

Peace and reintegration efforts in Afghanistan could succeed provided they are fully Afghan-led and Afghan-owned and carry all sections of Afghanistan's population together as well as abide by the redlines agreed to at the London Conference and later reaffirmed at the Kabul Conference, i.e., giving up violence, cutting off all links with terrorist groups, and accepting the democratic and pluralistic values of the Afghan Constitution, including women's rights.

Moving forward, it is important that the international community must keep in mind the lessons learnt from past experiences at negotiating with fundamentalist and extremist organizations and ensure that any peace process is conducted in an inclusive and transparent manner. Adequate capacity of the Afghan security forces and other Afghan institutions is a *sine qua non* for protecting Afghanistan's sovereignty, plurality and democracy. Gains of the last nine years stand to be squandered if this aspect does not receive the attention that it deserves as the international community ponders its next steps regarding Afghanistan.

Security and stabilization of Afghanistan will remain a distant goal unless we are able to isolate and root out the syndicate of terrorism, which includes elements of Al Qaeda, Taliban, LeT and other terrorist and extremist groups operating from within and outside Afghanistan's borders. The fight against terrorism cannot be compartmentalized. It is essential to ensure that support, sustenance and sanctuaries for terrorist organizations from outside Afghanistan are ended forthwith.

It is worrisome that despite reinforced International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)'s presence, there has been a continuing deterioration in the security environment. The latest

report of the UNSG notes that there has been a 69% increase in security incidents as compared to the same months in 2009.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, in the arduous journey for lasting peace, prosperity and stability in Afghanistan, Afghanistan needs a long-term commitment of the international community to successfully confront the challenges that lie ahead while progressively taking charge of its own destiny.

The international community must remain steadfast in its commitment in supporting Afghanistan. The Kabul Conference was a major step in the right direction. We welcome these efforts and are fully supportive of them. We appreciate the good work done by UNAMA.

Thank you

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