

STATEMENT AMBASSADOR HARDEEP SINGH PURI, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE,  
ON 'THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN' AT THE 66<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY ON NOVEMBER 21, 2011

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,

There have been significant political developments during the last one year. As NATO-ISAF prepares to drawdown its combat role in Afghanistan by the end of 2014, the efforts of the international community are increasingly focused on providing Afghanistan a helping hand to assist it in the transition and beyond.

It is important that the transition must be Afghan owned, the transition must be planned and implemented 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 Afghan state and its institutions.

We need concerted international and regional efforts towards laying the foundations of lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan. Sustained and tangible progress on security, governance and development issues is the key for peace, progress and stability in Afghanistan. We need accelerated progress simultaneously on economic cooperation along with political, security and other confidence building measures that could ensure peace and stability for Afghanistan and through it for the entire region.

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 there has been no let up in terrorist violence. The tragic assassination of Chairman of the High Peace Council and former President of Afghanistan Professor Burhanudin Rabbani in September and other senior Afghan leaders including President Karzai's brother late Ahmad Wali Karzai is a grim reminder of the overall deteriorating security environment in the country.

The continuing resilience of insurgents and their ability to target areas otherwise considered safe and secure indicates that the security gains are still tenuous. The latest Secretary General's report notes that the average monthly number of security incidents is up 39% as compared to the same period in 2010.

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 from within and 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.

Our vision for this 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 enhancement of their operational capabilities along with adequate enablers.

India fully supports an Afghan-led and Afghan owned inclusive and transparent process of reconciliation, accompanied by an inclusive political process and intra-Afghan dialogue and include renunciation of violence, cutting of ties to terrorist groups, abiding by the Afghan constitution with its protections for human rights, including the rights of women.

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 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.

Besides security, we also need concomitant progress on the developmental front. This also implies greater coherence, coordination and further streamlining of international

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

It is for this reason that as a developing neighbour itself, India has pledged up to US \$ 2 billion in development and humanitarian assistance, and recently signed a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement with Afghanistan looking at 2014 and beyond. The Agreement creates an institutional framework for our future cooperation in the fields of political and security cooperation, trade and economic cooperation, capacity building and education, and social, cultural, civil society and people-to-people relations.

Mr. President,

Afghanistan's growth strategy is built upon the country's comparative advantage of abundant natural resources and its strategic geographical location. These would have to be the building blocks of our vision for 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. This cooperation would not be only between governments, but have civil society and business as stakeholders.

Today our investments in Afghanistan require a framework of regional collaboration for their success. SAARC, of which Afghanistan is a full member, is an important vehicle for regional economic cooperation within the South Asian region.

From our vantage point in the SAARC region, we would like to highlight the potential of the dynamic SAARC market of over 1.5 billion, and the Indian economy of over US \$1.5 trillion growing at a rate of 8% per annum. Cooperation linking our region with Central Asia through Afghanistan could be a critical confidence building measure.

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.

It is in this context that India has participated in the recently held Istanbul Regional Conference and will participate in the forthcoming conference in Bonn to contribute to international and regional initiatives to support Afghanistan's efforts at nation building and calls upon the international community's long-term commitment towards

Afghanistan over the next decade. India appreciates and supports the good work done by UNAMA.

India will stand by the people of Afghanistan as they prepare to assume the responsibility for their governance and security after the withdrawal of international forces in 2014.

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.

[BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)