

Statement by

**Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin
Permanent Representative**

**Quarterly Debate
on United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)**

UN Security Council

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Mr. President,

Thank you for organizing this debate.

2. We thank Mr. Tadamichi Yamamoto, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, H.E. Mr. Dian Triansyah Djani, Chair of the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee, and H.E. Ms. Adela Raz, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for their insights on recent developments in Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

3. We meet at a time when the Afghan people are marking a century of independence this year and their country stands at yet another transformational juncture.

4. Preparations are underway for Presidential elections, scheduled a few weeks from now. Afghanistan is poised to renew its commitment to an order which ensures a democratically elected government is at the heart of any process to determine a peaceful settlement of its issues. A solution which will best suit the country and will be implementable in a sustainable and dignified manner is what we should all join in support of.

5. Notwithstanding the unforeseen shifts and challenges that we are accustomed to, we note the cautious optimism in the Secretary General's report. Even though the journey ahead may neither be easy nor predictable, we welcome the opportunities for peace and reconciliation emerging from the various efforts.

Mr. President,

6. It is the Afghan people who will implement and bear the consequences of any agreements arrived at. Hence, outcomes which have constitutional legitimacy and a political mandate and are arrived at in an inclusive and democratic way alone can ensure stability. We, therefore, support the Secretary General's call for direct talks.

7. Peace and reconciliation cannot go forward in an atmosphere of terror. There is a surge of violence in Afghanistan in recent days, including threats to the election process itself. This has deepened apprehensions that acts of terror are being used to jockey for a place of advantage in the negotiating process.

8. The international community needs to continue its support by fulfilling the commitments made to the Afghan security forces in their fight against the scourge of terrorism. The support and safe havens enjoyed from beyond Afghanistan's borders by groups such as the Taliban, the Haqqani Network, Da'esh, as well as Al Qaeda and its proscribed affiliates, including the Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed, must be addressed.

9. Having been victims of terrorism, we understand and empathise with our Afghan friends the suffering and pain they are undergoing.

Mr. President,

10. Amidst the clouds of uncertainty of the present, we should not forget the precious gains that the Afghan people have made in the last 18 years.

11. The Afghan people have strengthened and embraced democracy; established a constitutional order; promoted the welfare and rights of minorities and youth; built a strong and increasingly capable security force; and forged deeper regional links. All of this, they have done so, while confronting the most brutal threats posed by terrorism.

12. Even in the most difficult times, the famed Afghan resilience and strength of character shines through in their homes, schools, colleges, theatres, markets, factories, and indeed on their sports grounds. Lest anyone doubt this, Afghan cricketers recorded, just less than 48 hours ago, their second victory in three cricket test matches that they have played thus far. Such a feat was last accomplished by any other country way back in the 19th century.

13. This is only one instance, symbolic of the many gains that the Afghan people has made in recent times. Other areas include the remarkable reclamation by Afghanistan's women of their rightful place in all areas of their society. These hard-won achievements need to be nurtured, not nullified.

Mr. President,

14. India has worked with commitment to support the Afghan people through human resource development, including a recent capacity building program for officials from Afghan electoral bodies. This is in addition to support for infrastructure development, trade and investment, as well as enhancing connectivity.

15. We believe that there is hope on the horizon. We remain willing to work with all countries in the region and beyond, keeping Afghanistan's sovereignty and its ownership of the peace process at the forefront.

16. We hope that the international community, through this Council and its various instruments, can finally do right by the people of Afghanistan and support an inclusive peace which will ensure that the destiny of the country will be steered by the Afghan people.
