

**Statement by**

**Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin  
Permanent Representative**

**Open Debate  
on  
The Situation in Afghanistan**

**United Nations Security Council**

**19 June 2019**

**Mr. President,**

Thank you for organising this debate. We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Yamamoto and Ms. Sima Samar, Chairperson of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission for their briefings and appreciate the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Adela Raz for sharing her perspectives on the recent developments in her country.

**Mr. President,**

2. By all accounts, this is a crucial year for Afghanistan.
3. While Afghanistan gears up to have its fourth Presidential elections later this year, all of us need to be mindful of the gains that the Afghan people have made in the last 18 years.
4. They have strengthened democracy in their country; established a constitutional order; uplifted the status of women; protected the status of minorities and youth; built a strong army and sturdy security forces; and created stronger regional links.

5. They have also excelled in the sporting arena and are amongst the elite group of 10 teams, who are vying for the Cricket World Cup currently underway.

6. All of this, the Afghan people have done, while confronting and warding away the threats posed everyday by terrorism. While there may be perceptions of threats of transnational terrorism from Afghanistan, in reality it is the Afghan people who have been, for long, victims of transnational terrorism.

7. Even while the violence in Afghanistan continues, the gains of the Afghan people are visible and tangible. Support for the preservation and consolidation of these achievements is the only available option. Reversal and roll back are not options that can be considered. The international community needs to continue support for the painstakingly achieved institutional gains in Afghanistan.

**Mr. President,**

8. The concluding communique of the Loya Jirga, convened by President Ghani on April 29, 2019, called amongst other things for a ceasefire, talks without pre-conditions, a Taliban office to be opened in Afghanistan, a responsible withdrawal of international forces, the formation of an inclusive negotiating team, continued support from the international community, and the preservation of human rights, particularly women's rights. These provisions, agreed to by the Afghan people, have been long standing and are supported strongly by several countries in the region.

**Mr. President,**

9. Opportunities created by recent international efforts are welcome.

10. However, we see that some may be driven by a sense of an urgency with timelines which are, perhaps, not intrinsic to the needs of the Afghan people. We need to be cognizant that it is the Afghan people who will have to implement and sustain these agreements. The dignity and sustainability

of the gains made by the people of Afghanistan should be the paramount factor in determining what outcome will best suit the country and will be implementable in a sustainable and dignified manner.

11. We support an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled inclusive peace and reconciliation process, which promotes and protects unity, sovereignty, democracy, inclusiveness and prosperity of Afghanistan.

**Mr. President,**

12. As the way forward is chalked out, we cannot ignore that groups enjoying support and safe havens carry out violent and terrorist activities from across borders. They cannot be allowed to negotiate from a place of advantage.

13. The sanctuaries and safe havens provided to terror networks have to be addressed for genuine and sustainable peace. The terrorist activities of the Taliban, Haqqani Network, Da'esh, as well as Al Qaeda and its proscribed affiliates, including the Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed, need to end.

14. Experience with the Hizb-e-Islami shows that a peace settlement within the rubric of the current constitution is possible both politically and socially.

**Mr. President,**

15. India has age-old historical, cultural, civilizational and economic ties with Afghanistan. We are working closely with our Afghan partners in implementing developmental projects and will continue to do so.

16. Building reliable connectivity for land-locked Afghanistan is a key component of our partnership. We are mindful that all such projects respect state sovereignty and territorial integrity and are based on universally recognized international norms, transparency and principles of financial responsibility, ecological and environmental protection and preservation standards.

17. It is with this spirit that we are engaged in various connectivity projects in the region, including the Chabahar Port project and the direct India-Afghanistan Air-Freight Corridor, which have been successfully operationalized.

**Mr. President,**

18. The people of Afghanistan have come very far since 2001. India will continue to assist the Afghan people in fulfilling their desire for a peaceful country, which can focus on development and build on the gains in their journey towards greater prosperity and higher achievements. The conduct of transparent, credible and timely Presidential elections during the year will assist in this endeavor.

I thank you Mr. President.