



Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations

STATEMENT

OF

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at the General Debate

of

the 64th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

28th September 2009

NEW YORK

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First, let me welcome you, Mr. President, and congratulate you on assuming the Presidency of the 64th Session of the General Assembly. Afghanistan looks forward to working with you over the next year, and to strengthening international responses to the crises facing us today.

Mr. President,

Since its inception, the UN has been instrumental in addressing the world's challenges, particularly in the global south. But significant challenges remain unresolved. The growing gap in opportunities and prosperity between and within nations reminds us that we are still far away from meeting the ideals and objectives of the UN Charter in creating a just and secure world.

Strengthening and restructuring UN agencies remains pivotal in closing the gap between the objectives of the charter and the realities of the world. The UN is not a forum for lip service. It must embody the ideals of the charter by providing political and moral direction and leadership. In our increasingly interdependent world and the multi-laterally-oriented international system, the UN must assume greater responsibility for finding collective solutions to our challenges. The world, particularly developing nations, is faced with threats of poverty, underdevelopment, environmental degradation, extremism, fundamentalism, terrorism, cultural prejudice, spread of weapons of mass destruction and arms races.

Rather than just managing and reacting to problems, the UN must find ways to address the structural causes of the world's problems and conflicts. To these ends, closer cooperation between the UN, the International Criminal Court, international financial organizations and global civil society is vital in moving towards more just and equitable relations between nations.

Our efforts to address new challenges must be accompanied by a redoubling of our commitment to resolving remaining historical conflicts. Chief among them is the Middle East peace process. Afghanistan reiterates its call for the full implementation of UN Security Council resolutions as well as regional initiatives for bringing an end to the suffering of the Palestinian nation and creating a safe region for all Middle Eastern nations.

Finding a just and working solution to the Middle East peace process will also deny terrorists a potent recruiting tool and remove a significant obstacle towards mutual understanding and cooperation between the Islamic world and the West.

Mr. President,

On the eve of the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), the Islamic world faces a number of important internal and external questions and issues. Addressing these issues and reviving the prominent role of Muslims in contributing to humanity's progress and civilization can only be

accomplished if we, as members of the Islamic Ummah, collectively confront the current intellectual stagnation that many of us suffer from.

As with the golden era of Islamic history, intellectual freedom and creativity must be our highest social and political priorities. The Islamic world is in urgent need of an intellectual renaissance.

Islamophobia and the stereotyping of Muslims as a violent minority are issues that call all of us, but particularly Western nations, to seek effective ways to confront them. As with racism and discrimination, cultural prejudice must also be confronted and rejected.

Mr. President,

Let me now turn to the situation in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, negative coverage by international media has overshadowed the many positive trends and developments achieved since the collapse of the Taliban regime. Alongside its struggle with terrorism, drugs, weak state institutions and corruption, a new Afghanistan is emerging. This new Afghanistan is a growing democracy with rising state institutions, a budding civil society, a growing private sector and strong international solidarity.

In the course of the last 8 years, the percentage of access to basic health services has risen from 9% in 2001 to 85% today. The number of students has grown from one million students in 2001, all boys, to nearly 7 million boys and girls in 2008. In 2001, there were only 4000 students in universities; now more than 75000 are enrolled in 22 universities. The private militias of late 2001 have been replaced by a national security force of nearly 200,000.

Compared with one state radio and a couple of newspapers during the time of the Taliban, Afghanistan now has over 700 media outlets, which are often critical of the government.

In late 2001, only a handful across Afghanistan had access to internet; today, we have one million users. Our average GDP per capita has grown from \$US 185 in 2001 to \$US 485 in 2008.

The generous support and sacrifices of the international community were vital to our proud achievements in Afghanistan. We remain profoundly grateful to all of our international partners.

Mr. President,

The presidential and provincial elections of August demonstrated the many positive changes.

It was the first time in the modern history of Afghanistan that Afghan institutions were tasked with organizing and holding a nationwide election. Taking into account the socio-historic realities of Afghanistan, we have passed this national test successfully. In addition to the challenges inherent in any nation's first election experience, we were also

confronted by merciless enemies who did their utmost to disrupt and derail the process by terrorizing Afghan voters.

By braving the threats of Al Qaeda, the Taliban and other terrorist groups, Afghan voters demonstrated their determination and desire to have a modern, moderate and democratic political system.

The electoral campaigns were conducted in a democratic spirit. The candidates transcended ethnic and religious lines. There was no major physical violence between the candidates' supporters. The Independent Electoral Commission successfully conducted voter-registration, voting and counting.

The Afghan media played a crucial role in educating and mobilizing the voters. Our national security forces provided excellent security prior to and during the elections, with the full coordination and cooperation of our international partners. Despite these brave efforts, however, on Election Day we lost members of our own security forces, Afghan civilians, and members of the International Security Assistance Forces to terrorist attacks.

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and the UN-supported Election Complaint Commission (ECC) are working hard to count votes and address complaints.

As with any emerging democracy, undoubtedly, there were irregularities. But one should not assess a young terrorist-inflicted democracy with the criteria of stable, prosperous, and centuries-old democracies. This is not a call to condone fraud and irregularities. But in passing judgment, we should be conscious of the context, the process and the full picture, rather than of only one aspect or issue.

In due course, the Independent Electoral Commission and the Election Complaint Commission will announce and certify the final results of the elections. For the sake of the stability and consolidation of our young democratic institutions and processes, it is imperative that all of us respect and support their decision. Continuing efforts to delegitimize and undermine the integrity of the process and our institutions will certainly result in worsening the situation not only for Afghanistan but also for the international community.

Mr. President,

Holding elections was an important step in consolidating our fragile achievements. Afghanistan still faces significant challenges. Chief among them is terrorism, which enjoys safe havens and institutional support beyond our borders. As long as terrorist infrastructure and sanctuaries, including the leadership of the Taliban, remains protected, Afghanistan, the region and the world will be at the mercy of terrorists and of their totalitarian ideology and objectives. Narcotics, weak state institutions, corruption and socio-economic challenges such as poverty and unemployment are among our other challenges.

We can only address our interconnected challenges in Afghanistan and the region by pursuing a comprehensive strategy with adequate resources, effective implementation and more importantly strategic patience and steadfastness. The main pillars of such a comprehensive strategy are security, good governance, economic development, regional cooperation and international solidarity.

Afghanistan fully endorses President Obama's new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan as well as the new assessment by General McChrystal, particularly their emphasis on the need for a comprehensive and long-term strategy.

Mr. President,

The forthcoming international conference on Afghanistan will be an opportunity for Afghanistan and our international partners to review and renew our mutual commitment and determination to address Afghanistan's remaining challenges. We must revitalize the sense of partnership and cooperation between Afghanistan and the international community. We must aim to build upon our many joint achievements as well as to address our mutual shortcomings and deficiencies. The Afghan government's new compact with the international community will be complemented by its new compact with the Afghan people.

What the Afghan nation expects and deserves from a renewed partnership with the international community is the reassurance of long-term commitment and solidarity. They are rightly fearful of being abandoned once again to lawlessness, extremism, and external interference. Abandoning the Afghan nation, which has endured years of suffering and pain, will undermine the spirit of collective cooperation and the ideals of the UN. It will also undermine, for many generations to come, the moral credibility of those who fail to honor their promises and commitments to Afghans. Furthermore, it will embolden extremists in the region and beyond.

For its part, the Afghan Government is fully committed and determined to assume the lead responsibility of providing for the full realization of the aspirations of Afghan citizens and fulfilling its commitment to the international community. The principles of good governance, mutual accountability and regional cooperation are of the highest priority. There must be zero-tolerance for any drug-related activities and corruption by both the Afghan Government and our international partners.

Mr. President,

I have full confidence that with the full support and commitment of the family of nations, Afghanistan will be able to overcome the legacy of decades of violence and suffering. We will restore our historic position as a model of cooperation between different cultures and as a regional crossroads and hub for trade, transit, transportation and tourism.

I thank you.