Mr. President,

We are considering the situation in Afghanistan on this day, the second anniversary of the historic Bonn Agreement. Pakistan attaches great importance to this Agreement which has set in motion a process for the rebuilding of political institutions and the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan. Pakistan has worked closely with the international community in the implementation of the Bonn Agreement.

2. Afghanistan has reached a crucial stage in the implementation of the Bonn Process. The Constitutional Process is underway as well as preparations for elections next year. While there has been progress in the political process, reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan, these cannot be achieved in the absence of security. It is the deteriorating security situation which threatens stability not just in southern and south-eastern Afghanistan but throughout the country; creates hurdles on Afghanistan’s path to recovery and development, and above all seeks to undermine and derail the Bonn Process itself.

3. Afghanistan’s worsening security situation has been comprehensively analyzed in the report of the recent Security Council Mission to Afghanistan. As identified in the report, the main factors contributing to deterioration in Afghanistan’s security situation are: (a) the activities of the Taliban and other extremists; (b) the arbitrary control exercised by local commanders and warlords; and (c) the illicit drug production and trafficking. Among the key concrete recommendations proposed in the report are (i) the withdrawal of all factional forces from Kabul in accordance with the provisions of the Bonn Agreement; (ii) reforms in Afghanistan’s security sector including in the Afghan National Army, Police, Ministry of Defence and intelligence services; and (iii) the initiation of a process of national reconciliation directed at all Afghans willing to help rebuild the country irrespective of past events in order to strengthen the central government and the basic institutions of the state. These are the essential prerequisites for reversing the alarming security situation in Afghanistan.

4. Pakistan welcomes the recent decision by NATO to expand the presence of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) outside Kabul. While this is, no doubt, a step in the right direction, piecemeal and modest deployments, however, will not create the necessary conditions for a secure environment in Afghanistan. What is required is a rapid and massive expansion of ISAF and deployment of its contingents throughout Afghanistan. This is the essential requirement for providing stability throughout the country; to assist in the extension of the central government’s authority and to ensure that a fair, impartial and verifiable disarmament and demobilization of all of Afghanistan’s warring factions takes place.

5. In addition to the above, there is also a need to tackle the serious drug problem in Afghanistan which is both a symptom and cause of the instability in that country. All the armed factions in Afghanistan – including the warlords and the Taliban are taking advantage in the illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs. All of these are benefiting from this trade and it is in their interest to perpetuate this also.

6. Pakistan recognizes the serious threat posed to Afghanistan’s security by the resurgence of extremist forces – including the Taliban – in eastern and southern Afghanistan. This is a symptom of a deeper problem which is directly linked to Pashtoon alienation and the rising power of the warlords. The reality must be recognized: one, not every angry Pashtoon qualifies as a
Taliban, and two, there is no warlord in Afghanistan who is serving anyone’s interest except his own. The chaos, corruption and criminal activities being perpetuated again by major and minor warlords in Afghanistan is recreating the situation which existed in Afghanistan in 1992-1993. It was this chaos, corruption, and banditry which generated popular support for the Taliban. In the absence of security, law and order, people in villages and towns are once again turning to religious leaders and extremists. Some of these elements are associated with the Taliban; others are not.

7. For its own part, Pakistan will not allow any group or entity to use its soil for acts of terrorism in Afghanistan. Given our role in the ouster of the Taliban after the tragic events of September 11th, 2001, Pakistan would not like to see their revival and return to power in Afghanistan. Pakistan is cooperating with the United States and Afghanistan in strengthening security along our Western borders through the Trilateral Commission. In its last meeting, held on 3 December, the three sides agreed to establish a sub-committee on exchanging military information and coordination to develop a “common operational picture of the terrorist threat in the border regions.” This would significantly enhance the military capabilities of all three parties in the war against terrorism. The joint communiqué issued after that meeting stated that “the meeting resulted in a renewed mutual commitment of the three countries to increase strategic cooperation to counter the terrorist threat.”

8. For the first time in its history, Pakistan has deployed 70,000 troops along this 2,500 kilometre long border, which is difficult, porous and inhospitable. In addition, we have taken proactive measures in the border areas, including the formation and deployment of an elite rapid reaction force, greater intelligence gathering, constructing a 30 kilometer fence in key areas along the border and installing searchlights and flood lights in various places. Our troops have orders to kill suspected Taliban and Al-Qaida infiltrators or exfiltrators on sight. We are carrying out our anti-terrorism operations at great human, material and political cost. We have thus far conducted over 150 such operations and have captured over 500 Al-Qaida and Taliban elements. We have lost 25 soldiers and policemen in this process. No other country has achieved so many successes against Al-Qaida and Taliban remnants, and with very few exceptions, no other country has paid so high a price.

9. Rather than seeking to shift the blame for the growing insecurity, the time has come to stop the blame-game and to address the real security threats which remain inside Afghanistan. Serious decisions must be taken, starting with the demilitarization of Kabul. There can be no successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of all the armed factions as long it is perceived that the capital remains under the control of some warlords and factions in defiance of the Bonn Agreement.

10. Pakistan remains committed to its obligations under the Kabul Declaration on Good Neighbourly Relations signed on 22nd December, last year. There is no country which wants peace and stability in Afghanistan more than Pakistan, and no country stands to suffer more from instability in Afghanistan than Pakistan. Pakistan stands by its commitment to fight the terrorist threat in Afghanistan. At the same time, let me affirm that Pakistan will not tolerate the use of Afghan soil by third parties to carry out terrorist attacks against the immediate neighbours of Afghanistan.

11. Earlier this year, President Musharraf told a visiting Afghan Minister that “Pakistan would continue to strive for a peaceful and stable neighborhood with a view to creating an environment for collective development and prosperity.” This is our aim in Afghanistan and in the region. We, therefore, value the signing in Doha of the Trade, Transit and Investment Declaration as a continuation of the Kabul Declaration. Pakistan would also like to see a greater integration of Afghanistan into regional economic cooperation structures. In this regard, we strongly support the gas pipeline project connecting Pakistan, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. We also welcome all other initiatives aimed at economically integrating Afghanistan with its neighbours.
At the Tokyo Conference, Pakistan pledged $100 million over a five years towards Afghanistan’s reconstruction efforts. Our assistance is being provided in areas identified by the Afghan government and channeled through its authority. In addition, we have extended further transit trade facilities to Afghanistan, including the removal of several items from the negative list, the simplification of customs procedures and the reduction of transportation cost and freight charges by 25-30%. We have offered Afghanistan expanded facilities at our new south-western port of Gwadar. In addition, Pakistan is seriously considering ways to provide electricity to the southern and eastern parts of Afghanistan, which has been requested to us by the Afghan government. Pakistan is also exploring with the Afghan government, possibilities of private sector cooperation, investment opportunities, particularly in the areas of cement, pharmaceuticals and consumer goods.

In addition to assistance in relief and reconstruction, Pakistan has provided arms, ammunition and equipment for the Afghan National Army (ANA), training for the ANA and Afghan police. The first batch of Afghan diplomats recently completed their training at our Foreign Service Academy. We are also offering assistance in counter-narcotics and working with the Afghan authorities to strengthen border controls. Pakistan will continue to offer its fullest support to the Afghan Transitional Government in all of its efforts aimed at peace, security, reconstruction, and rehabilitation of Afghanistan. These are as important for Pakistan as they are for Afghanistan.

Over the last two decades, Pakistan has hosted millions of Afghan refugees, largely without much appreciable assistance from the international community. We are pleased with the voluntary repatriation of a number of these refugees. However, we remain concerned over the slow down of the repatriation process because of insecurity in Afghanistan as well as the lack of adequate economic activity for the returnees. We hope that the international community would target some of its recovery and reconstruction assistance to rural areas where most of the refugees originate from. This would ensure that those who return home will have a reason to remain there.

In addition, we hope that the millions of Afghan refugees who remain in Pakistan and Iran will not be excluded from the historical constitutional and election process in Afghanistan. We hope that these refugees who still account for almost 10% of Afghanistan’s population will be accorded commensurate representation in Afghanistan’s future parliament.

Finally, I wish to reiterate Pakistan’s full and unequivocal support for the Bonn Process and President Hamid Karzai’s Government. Pakistan supports Mr. Karzai’s efforts aimed at national reconciliation and reconstruction of his country. There can be no doubt that a strong, stable and prosperous Afghanistan is in the interest of Pakistan. Pakistan will spare no effort to achieve that goal. We reaffirm our resolve to work with the international community to promote peace, stability, reconstruction and economic development in Afghanistan.

I thank you, Mr. President.