Madam President,

Peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan is vital – most of all for the long-suffering people of this unique country, but also for Pakistan and, indeed for the international community.

2. Two years ago, the prospects for success in Afghanistan appeared to bright. Indeed, much was achieved – the holding of Presidential and Parliamentary elections, in adoption of the constitution, and other benchmarks of the Bonn process, revived economic activity, the rise of trade, the return of many refugees. Today, however, perceptions of Afghanistan’s prospects are considerably gloomier.

3. The UN Secretary-General’s report on Afghanistan, issued in September, analyses the various facets of the current situation in Afghanistan. We share most of the analysis and assessments.

4. Today, as in the past 26 years of Afghanistan’s history, the central issue is peace and security. There is good reason to be concerned about the growing violence across the country and especially the revived insurgency in the South and South-East of Afghanistan and its possible extension to other parts of the country.

5. There are multiple and interlinked sources of the growing insecurity and insurgency in Afghanistan:

   - the absence of good governance and pervasive corruption, fed in part by the drug economy;
   - the political alienation in large parts of the country, especially in the Pashtun-majority provinces;
   - the rise of the drug economy and associated criminal gangs, often posing as Taliban insurgents;
   - the resurgence of the Taliban, especially in the South and South East;
   - the failure to deliver economic and social development, again especially in the South and South-East; and
   - the negative fallout of indiscriminate military and air operations and collateral civilian casualties.
6. It is essential to focus on addressing each of these causes of the deteriorating environment in Afghanistan through a clear and comprehensive strategy.

**Madam President,**

7. Pakistan has a vital and strategic interest in ensuring peace, stability and progress in Afghanistan. Indeed, the destinies of our two nations are inextricably interlinked. Insecurity in Afghanistan causes insecurity in our Western frontier regions. Insecurity in Afghanistan obstructs our objective of creating trade and energy links with Central Asia and beyond. Pakistan has not and will not spare any effort to contribute to stability and peace in Afghanistan.

8. Pakistan has committed $250 million to assist Afghanistan’s development. One hundred and ten million have been spent so far. Our bilateral trade has grown exponentially to over $1.4 billion last year and is rising. Over 60,000 Pakistanis are employed in implementation of various development projects in Afghanistan. Afghans are enrolled in various training institutions in Pakistan. Our leaders exchange visits frequently. And, as brothers, we often talk frankly and openly to each other, and I will do so today.

**Madam President,**

9. There are, of course, certain circles and some countries in our region who do not desire to see the creation of the close friendship and cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan which geography, history, faith and ethnicity dictate. For them, and for some others, it is convenient to externalize the causes of Afghanistan’s current problems, especially the resurgence of the Taliban. Let me emphasize: the problem is within Afghanistan. The Taliban is an Afghan phenomenon. The government should accept its responsibility rather than transfer blame on to Pakistan or others.

10. The Secretary-General’s report has rightly noted that the insurgency is being conducted by “Afghans operating inside Afghanistan’s borders.” It identifies five “distinct leadership centres” of the insurgency all located within Afghanistan. According to the report, “the foot soldiers of the insurgency are Afghans recruited within Afghanistan.”

11. There are, of course, some elements of the Taliban and their sympathizers who crossed over into Pakistan following the post-9/11 military intervention by U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan and they melded with the 3 million Afghan refugees who have been in Pakistan for the past 25 years.

12. Pakistan has made every effort to prevent the cross-border movement by Taliban militants and by other terrorists across the mountainous 1800 mile border. We have conducted over 80 operations against known locations of terrorists and militants. We have lost over 600 personnel in these operations. Pakistan has deployed over 80,000 troops in our frontier regions and along our border. We coordinate operations with the
coalition and Afghan forces on a continuous basis, including through the Tripartite Commission. We have proposed to fence and mine selective sections of the border to prevent cross-border movement. We have, for long, requested equipment and technical capabilities to enhance our capacity for surveillance, detection and interdiction. We trust these will be finally provided to us.

13. Therefore, we resent assertions that question our sincerity or intentions. Preventing cross border movement of terrorists or Taliban militants is a joint responsibility shared by Afghanistan, Pakistan and the coalition forces. While we have deployed 80,000 troops on the border, there is no matching deployment on the other side. For example, we have 97 army posts on the border in the North Waziristan section as compared to 3 NATO/ISAF and 21 Afghan army posts-lightly manned and with dubious capacity. Pakistan cannot accept the onus for controlling the long and difficult border. The coalition forces and the Afghans should assume an equal responsibility.

14. Similarly, loose talk about “sanctuaries” ignores the reality that there are vast tracts of territory in Afghanistan which are outside government or coalition control and serve as sanctuaries for the insurgency. Their elimination should be a priority for the Government of Afghanistan and coalition forces, instead of seeking to excuse its incapacity by pointing fingers across the border.

15. There are certainly Taliban militants and sympathizers among the 3 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan. We have proposed that the refugee camps close to the border be relocated within Afghanistan’s territory. We urge the Government of Afghanistan to accept this proposal and cooperate in implementing it. We also plan to repatriate all the Afghan refugees over the next 3 years. This should obviate the problem of cross border movement and allegations about sanctuaries and “shuras”.

Madam President,

16. The lessons of history, especially Afghan history, dictate that military force cannot offer the answer to the problems of alienation and insurgency. A comprehensive strategy, compromising military, political and economic elements, can be more successful. This will require a painstaking process of reconciliation and reconstruction especially in the regions afflicted by insurgency and violence. Reconciliation will involve opening the doors to those who feel they have been excluded from political participation, power and progress. Tribal leaders and other traditional sources of influence should be incorporated into reconciliation and reconstruction process. The aim should be to strengthen the peacemakers and to neutralize the troublemakers.

17. A cessation of hostilities in each region would enable the implementation of programmes for reconstruction and development, especially in South and South-East of Afghanistan where there has been virtually no development activity so far. President Musharraf has proposed the implementation of a $4 – 5 billion “Marshal Plan” for the region. This is a fraction of the cost of current military operations. Infrastructure development, job creation and provision of services will help to end the attraction of
opposition and insurgency. Development is also indispensable to address the problem encountered in eliminating poppy cultivation and the drug economy that is feeding both corruption as well as the insurgency.

Madam President,

18. Pakistan has pursued this approach of reconciliation and reconstruction in the agreement concluded with tribal leaders in our North Wazirastan Agency. It has led to a decline in violence and militancy. There is no basis for assertions that it has increased violent incidents in Afghanistan. On the contrary, NATO statistics show that violent incidents have since declined. We intend to convene tribal Jirgas in other parts of our frontier regions to conclude similar peace and development agreements. We believe that such agreements could be replicated on the Afghan side, especially in the South and South-East, to strengthen the tribal and traditional leadership structures, end political alienation, cease hostilities and promote reconstruction and development. This was done by the U.K. forces in Musa Qila. We are glad this approach was endorsed at the Summit meeting between Presidents Musharraf, Karzai and Bush in Washington last September.

Madam President,

19. Five years after the military intervention by the coalition in Afghanistan, it is time to review the situation comprehensively and objectively. We are not pursuing a war of vengeance in Afghanistan. The international community’s aim in Afghanistan is to restore peace, stability and progress to a state that has been ravaged by almost three decades of conflict. We must seek success in Afghanistan through reconciliation and reconstruction, not by bombs and bullets.

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