

**Statement by Ambassador Shamshad Ahmad, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations on "The Situation in Afghanistan" at the Security Council 26 March 2002**

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**Mr. President,**

I wish to begin by congratulating you on your Presidency of the Security Council and thank you for holding a public meeting on this important subject in light of the Secretary General's latest report.

2. We appreciate the efforts of the Secretary-General and those of his Special Representative, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi to restore peace and stability to Afghanistan. We welcome the United Nations' continuing work in facilitating the implementation of the Bonn Agreement. In this regard we support the Secretary-General's proposal, contained in his report, for a "two-pillared structure" for the United Nations' Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) -- (i) to facilitate the political process in Afghanistan as well as (ii) assisting in the humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction of that war-ravaged country. We agree with the report's concept of a "light expatriate footprint" and its aim to "bolster Afghan capacities". We hope that the UN will continue to play its role in helping the Afghans to find "homegrown" solutions to their problems and bring their country back in the comity of nations as a responsible and law-abiding state.

**Mr. President,**

3. In trying to assist in Afghanistan's political, humanitarian and economic recovery, we must draw lessons from Afghanistan's tragic past. Afghanistan is not only one of the most difficult challenges the international community has faced in recent times, it also represents a case where a country which was so much in need of international support and assistance had been neglected and isolated for so long. But today it is not the time for remorse nor for remaining frozen in the past. These are unusual times demanding fresh approaches. As we review the situation in Afghanistan, we must be guided by the need not only to rectify but also to avoid the mistakes of the past.

4. Now that the international community has committed itself to healing Afghanistan, we hope that it will not walk away from it again. It must remain engaged with Afghanistan and the region. A country ravaged by war has to be rebuilt. A society torn by conflict has to be healed. All this requires commitment and perseverance. Afghanistan must never be allowed to become a breeding ground or haven for terrorists again. The long-term solution of the problem of terrorism in Afghanistan lies in the restoration of peace and stability and the reconstruction of that country.

5. The time has come to break the vicious cycle of the past. Humanitarian relief and reconstruction plans must be aimed at genuinely addressing the causes and consequences of instability which the Afghan people have suffered for decades. Every economic plan, whether for relief or reconstruction, must generate job opportunities for the Afghan people. Their attention must be diverted from misery to more constructive activities. There are extensive blueprints prepared by the regional organization, ECO, which I had the privilege to serve as its Secretary-General, which could be utilized in converting this landlocked country into a bridgehead connecting Central Asia with the warm waters of the Arabian Sea. Afghanistan has the potential of being the shortest transit route between Central Asian states with the rest of the world. In due course, road, rail and gas & oil pipelines projects passing through Afghanistan could bring about unprecedented economic well-being to this country. Any attempt, sponsored or exploited by external vested interests, to pitch Afghanistan against any of its neighbours or to deepen its ethnic or sectarian divide would only prolong the agony of its people. We must guard against any such temptation. Needless to emphasize that an Afghanistan, at peace with itself and at peace with its neighbours is the sure safeguard, in the future, for its own security as well as that of the region.

**Mr. President,**

6. Security remains the most pressing issue at this point in time. It is the very prerequisite for the implementation of the Bonn Agreement, and imperative for a stable political and economic future of Afghanistan. The present lack of security has been a major hindrance to stability in the past and continues to threaten peace today. The Afghan people have suffered far too long at the hands of ambitious warlords. The international community must, therefore, ensure that the old rivalries and hatreds, which once wreaked havoc across Afghanistan, are not given a chance to obstruct the establishment of a stable political dispensation in Afghanistan.

7. Without security there can be no peace in Afghanistan, no unity, no stability, no humanitarian relief, no reconstruction or recovery. The Bonn Agreement stipulated the establishment of a "United Nations mandated force" for the maintenance of security for Kabul as well as other areas of the country. While we support the deployment of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul, we feel that its size and scope must now be expanded and extended to all over the country, especially its major urban centers. ISAF, in the absence, of a proper Afghan security force, is the only option we have at the moment and restricting it only to Kabul will in effect defeat the very purpose for which it was established.

8. In addition to the efforts of the international community to help them, we hope that all Afghan factions and groups will avail themselves of this unique opportunity to extricate their country from the abyss in which it has remained for the last two decades. The success of the Bonn Agreement will depend on how the Afghan leaders acquit themselves in rebuilding their country through a mutual spirit of accommodation. The tribal and ethnic structures and traditions will remain of special relevance in any future set up. While the world owes them a helping hand, in the larger measure, it is only upto the Afghans themselves to make or mar the future of their country.

**Mr. President,**

9. Pakistan, for its part, remains committed to continue to play its role in assisting the recovery and reconstruction of Afghanistan. We have assured the Afghan Interim Administration under the leadership of Chairman Hamid Karzai of our full support and cooperation. Over the last two decades, Pakistan has been providing shelter to millions of Afghan refugees. In addition to this, we have pledged another \$100 million worth of assistance for Afghanistan's immediate rehabilitation and reconstruction needs. No country, other than Afghanistan itself, has suffered more from the conflict in Afghanistan than Pakistan and no country could have a greater stake in the return of peace and stability to Afghanistan than Pakistan. Pakistan, like the rest of the international community, hopes that this new era will bring positive changes in Afghanistan. We hope that the United Nations' efforts in Afghanistan will truly contribute to achievement of peace, security and development in that country which needs it so badly.

10. Needless to emphasize again that this time the international community must not walk away from Afghanistan, as it did in the past. It must demonstrate the political will and the determination to engage and help the Afghan people in rebuilding peace and the economy of their country. The Secretary-General is correct, when he says in his report, that Afghanistan is a "shattered society". It will certainly take a long time to "heal the wounds left by twenty-three years of war." "The process of healing has started" and must not be allowed to reverse itself. This requires from all – the Afghans themselves as well as the international community – a "continued commitment and determination to stay the course." Afghanistan "now has the chance at least to be a country at peace with its neighbours and with itself."

**I thank you. Mr. President.**

New York  
26 March, 2002