
Mr. President,

Let me first discharge the pleasant duty of felicitating you on the skilful manner in which you are guiding the work of the Security Council during this month. I would also like to take this opportunity to extend to the distinguished Permanent Representative of Greece and the Greek delegation our congratulations on a successful presidency last month. Mr. President, we appreciate the holding of this open debate at yet another important juncture in Afghanistan’s march towards peace and stability. I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary General Jean Arnault for his informative briefing.

2. This meeting, Mr. President, offers a good opportunity to review progress towards the objectives of the Bonn process, especially the culminating step of parliamentary and provincial council elections next month.

3. Pakistan shares the concern over increased insecurity in Afghanistan. The causes are several and complex. As a United States official stated in June 2005: “Last year the order of concern for security in Afghanistan was: Taliban, Al-Qaeda, warlords, drugs. This year, it’s going to be: drugs, warlords, Al-Qaeda, Taliban.” (Financial Times: 6 June 2005). The Secretary-General’s report (A/60/224-S/2005/525) outlines a number of remaining challenges in the fields of security, institution-building, security sector reform, reintegration part of the DDR, counter-narcotics, public sector and civil service reform, reconstruction and infrastructure development, socio-economic recovery and uplift, and provision of basic services to the Afghan people.

Mr. President,

4. We need a comprehensive strategy for success in Afghanistan - addressing the security, political, economic and social objectives of Afghanistan. The Secretary-General’s report observes, inter alia: “security, effective institutions and development will require time and concerted efforts to build upon the achievements of the past three and a half years. Even without the burden of violent insurgency, the reconstruction of Afghanistan faces a truly formidable combination of challenges, including the pervasive drug economy and some of the worst social and economic indicators in the world”.

5. Apart from Afghanistan itself, no other country has a more vital stake in establishment of peace, security and prosperity in that country than Pakistan. Peace in Afghanistan is essential for tranquility and development of Pakistan’s
own border regions. Peace will enable the nearly 3 million Afghan refugees who remain on our soil after 20 years, virtually without any International support, to return home voluntarily, and in dignity and honour. Peace and economic revival in Afghanistan will accelerate the already burgeoning trade and economic cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan. And, peace in Afghanistan will open up the shortest transit routes for trade, energy, raw materials and goods between Central Asia, South Asia and the world, with enormous economic benefit to Afghanistan, Pakistan and all the countries of the region.

6. There is, therefore Mr. President, no ambiguity in our commitment to help the government of Afghanistan and the international coalition in restoring security and achieving the other agreed goals of the Bonn process. Cross-border traffic is one – but not the major – element in Afghanistan’s insecurity matrix. Pakistan is making an enormous effort. We have mounted a determined campaign to eliminate Al-Qaeda and Taliban elements on our side of the border. We have captured over 700 of them, the highest number captured by any country. As President Musharraf observed a few days ago, as a result of our efforts, Al-Qaeda’s command and control structure has been broken and largely dismantled. This terrorist movement now operates largely through splinter cells in many countries. We have deployed 75,000 troops, for the first time in history in the frontier tribal areas of Pakistan, for pacification and interdictions, largely with the concurrence of the tribes involved. Seven hundred (700) posts have been established along the border. Four thousand (4000) troops are being added for interdiction duties in the run-up to the Afghan Parliamentary elections. Our troop strength on the border, I may mention Mr. President, is higher than the combined strength of the national and international military presence within Afghanistan. We are therefore disappointed that these great efforts, which are being made by Pakistan at considerable sacrifices of human and financial means, have not been mentioned in the Secretary General’s report. The effort to prevent two-way flow of Al-Qaeda, Taliban, tribal or criminal fighters is a cooperative endeavour between Pakistan, Afghanistan and the U.S. forces in Afghanistan promoted inter alia through the Tripartite Commission. In particular, Pakistan relies on aerial and electronic real time intelligence from the U.S. side to succeed in interdiction operations for which we have created a Rapid Reaction Force.

7. Pakistan supports the continuation of the presence of the U.S. and ISAF forces in Afghanistan until peace and stability are fully restored there and a viable Afghan National Army can assume full responsibility for the country’s security. Most of the coalition’s fuel, food and other supplies come from Pakistan. Those who therefore raise doubts on Pakistan’s commitment to peace and security in Afghanistan, often by exaggerating the threats from cross border movements are those who wish to find excuses for their own failure or those, some of whom we have heard here, who wish to poison relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.
8. Pakistan’s relations with Afghanistan have improved considerably and have diversified. These are marked by frequent exchange of high level visits, progressive institutionalization (signing of Agreements/MOUs on ten different fields during the last three years), record levels of transit trade, which has doubled in the last three years, and bilateral trade ($1.2 billion in the last fiscal year), and our active participation in reconstruction of Afghanistan. During the visit of our Prime Minister to Kabul in July 2005, a number of economic cooperation programmes were agreed including the announcement by Pakistan of additional assistance of 100 million dollars for Afghan reconstruction. These funds will be utilized in consultation with Afghan authorities on projects prioritized by the Afghans. Of the 100 million dollars earlier pledged by Pakistan at the Tokyo Conference, almost 50 million have already been utilized for humanitarian assistance, projects in infrastructure, health, education and transport sectors, and capacity building of state institutions. The remaining amount has been allocated for several hospitals in different cities and Faculty blocks in universities, besides Chaman-Spin Boldak rail track. In the context of institution building, Pakistan is also providing training to Afghan officials in several fields including diplomacy, judiciary, police, counter narcotics, agriculture, customs and banking.

Mr. President,

9. As the Secretary General has noted in his report, the discussion on the post election agenda would provide a unique opportunity for a broad dialogue between Afghanistan and the international community in particular the countries of the region. Pakistan stands ready to play its part in that process and reiterates its full support for durable peace and stability in Afghanistan. We also call on the international community and the United Nations to remain steadfast in their commitment to Afghanistan. In that context, we look forward to the report to be submitted by the Secretary General on the future role of the United Nations in Afghanistan.

Thank you.