

**Statement by Ambassador Munir Akram, Permanent Representative of
Pakistan to the United Nations, in the Security Council's debate on the
"Situation in Afghanistan", on 20 March, 2007**

Mr. President,

It is a pleasure to see South Africa, and an eminent colleague, preside over the Security Council during this month, which promises to be eventful and important. I also wish to express our high appreciation for the active Presidency of Slovakia in February. Let me also welcome the participation of H.E. Massimo D'Alema, Foreign Minister of Italy in today's meeting.

2. We have listened carefully to the briefing provided by Mr. Tom Koenigs, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and by Mr. Antonio Maria Costa, the Executive Director of UNODC. We have also studied the latest report of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

3. As the briefing and the report indicate, there are multiple challenges to the restoration of peace, security and development in Afghanistan – terrorism, Taliban, extremism, drugs and criminals, warlords and factional friction, inadequate security and governance, as well as a relatively small international presence in Afghanistan.

4. This is an appropriate opportunity to evolve an objective and correct assessment of the environment in Afghanistan and to formulate a strategy for success that responds to this environment. This strategy must combine military containment with political reconciliation, administrative control and rapid socio-economic development. It must build peace in Afghanistan in a bottom-up approach – village by village, district by district – offering incentives and disincentives to win the cooperation and support of the local population in the South and South East of the country. It is vital to win the hearts and minds of the people; more important than killing or capturing insurgents. It is essential to adopt military tactics that do not create more alienation and more opposition and more enemies. Most importantly, our strategy for success must accelerate reconstruction and development. It must offer hope to the people – hope for peace, for jobs, for better lives for themselves and their children. Such a strategy could be implemented through the traditional structures and practices, such as the convening of tribal Jirgas in the troubled parts of Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

5. Pakistan's frontier regions have been deeply affected by the three decades of war and conflict in Afghanistan. After the U.S. intervention in 2001, many Al-Qaeda and Taliban elements crossed the border into Pakistan. The people of this region, which constitute 1% of our total population have also been afflicted by the rise of extremism and terrorism. As part of our programme for modernization and rapid socio-economic development, it is in Pakistan's vital interest to eliminate Al-Qaeda terrorists, Taliban militancy and Talebanization in these frontier regions of Pakistan. The success of stabilization, reconciliation and development in Afghanistan will contribute to Pakistan's campaign against extremism and terrorism in our frontier regions. Likewise our success against Al-Qaeda, the Taliban militancy and Talibanization will contribute to peace and security in Afghanistan. Peace in Afghanistan will also enable Pakistan to realize its strategic objective of serving, together with Afghanistan, as the hub for trade and economic cooperation between the adjacent regions of South Asia, West Asia and Central Asia. Our commitment to promoting peace, security and progress in Afghanistan is complete, unswerving and unquestionable.

6. Despite media reports and some unfortunate public statements, the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan is close, cooperative and intense. Our leaders exchange frequent visits. We offer transit to Afghanistan's external trade. Our bilateral trade has grown to \$ 1.2 billion and is rising rapidly. Pakistan has committed \$300 million for development in Afghanistan. Sixty thousand Pakistanis are working in Afghanistan. The next Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan will be held in Islamabad later this year.

7. Pakistan is also participating actively in the joint efforts of the international coalition and the Afghan government to promote security in Afghanistan and especially in the border regions. Cooperation in the military Tripartite Commission is operational and constant. The Commission now has a Joint Intelligence Operations Centre in Kabul. It has also created an Operational Coordination Working Group.

Mr. President,

8. This is an appropriate occasion to outline the measures which Pakistan is taking, or intends to take, to contribute to the success of the campaign for peace, stability and progress in Afghanistan and in our frontier region.

9. First, our campaign against Al-Qaeda. The Pakistan Army and intelligence services have played the leading role in much of the success against Al-Qaeda. We

have captured over 700 Al-Qaeda terrorists. Most of Al-Qaeda's command and control structure was destroyed with Pakistan's support. We have launched over 90 military operations in some of the most treacherous terrain to eliminate the presence of terrorists, especially foreign fighters. Vice President Cheney of the United States recently said and I quote "I have often said before and I believe it's still true that we have captured and killed more Al-Qaeda in Pakistan than any place else" unquote. Pakistan has lost over 700 soldiers in these operations. In retaliation, the terrorists have launched several suicide attacks against our leaders, our security forces as well as civilian targets. But this has not deterred us. We shall continue to take resolute action against any suspected terrorist activity anywhere on our territory. Al-Qaeda will certainly not be allowed to regroup on our soil.

10. Second, our actions against the Taliban. Over the past three years, we have captured and handed over to Afghanistan 1500 Taliban militants, including a large number of the leadership. Just during the last year, we have handed over 300 captured Taliban to Afghanistan. However, as the UN's past and present reports have noted, most of the Taliban activity is within Afghanistan as are their 5 command structures. This should not be distorted. Similarly as for financing of the Taliban from abroad, the major source of financing lies inside Afghanistan that is the production of drugs and drugs trade.

11. Third, Pakistan has taken significant measures to control the difficult 2500 km border with Afghanistan. Pakistan has, for the first time in recent history, inducted its armed forces in the tribal areas. Eighty thousand Pakistani troops are now deployed in FATA and along the border. This number is higher than the combined forces of the international coalition and the Afghan national Army. We have established 1000 border posts. There are 300 on the other side. We plan to fence about 35 km of the border in the roughest terrain where clandestine crossings take place. In response to the concerns of some of our friends, we are reviewing the plan to mine parts of the border. Pakistan is also introducing stricter measures to better regulate the legal border traffic. Over one border crossing alone – Chaman in Balochistan – about 40,000 people and 14,000 vehicles cross in both directions each day. An estimated 300,000 people cross the Afghan-Pakistan border – legally – each day. To improve identification checks, we are introducing biometric cards. It is not very helpful, Mr. President, when border guards on the other side cut up and throw away these cards.

12. I would also like to underline that control of the border is a joint responsibility of Pakistan, Afghanistan and the international coalition forces. Pakistan cannot accept the entire onus of controlling the border. Mr. Koenigs has referred to suicide attackers, facilitators and Taliban commanders crossing over from Pakistan. I would like to say that the crossing of the border is in both directions and I hope he will agree that this is in both directions and therefore the

Taliban must be controlled on both sides of the border. Pakistan should also be provided real-time intelligence and the electronic and other equipment also which we have requested to enhance its ability to control the long and difficult border.

13. Fourth, Pakistan will act shortly to eliminate the atrocious allegations about so-called “sanctuaries” and “safe havens” for the Taliban and terrorist training camps. This information is unsubstantiated and should not be given currency. What happens is that the Taliban militants mostly seek to merge into the refugee camps which are close to the border. In a camp, say of 80,000 Afghans, it is obviously difficult to identify who are these Taliban militants. We have reached an agreement with the Afghan government to relocate 4 of the large camps – Pir Alizai and Gidri Jungle in Baluchistan and Jallozai and Kachi Garhi in the North Western Frontier Province – to secure sites inside Afghanistan. We ask for the cooperation of the international community to create the facilities on the Afghan side to receive these refugees, and thus we shall end this story of sanctuaries.

14. Pakistan has also initiated a programme to repatriate all the remaining 3 million Afghan refugees within the next three years. We have hosted them for 30 years without any appreciable international assistance. This has placed an unconscionable burden on our national exchequer, our economy, our environment and our society. We hope conditions will be created in Afghanistan for the return of these refugees in dignity and security. The international community should provide assistance and cooperation to Pakistan and Afghanistan in this repatriation process.

15. Fifth, Pakistan is pursuing a comprehensive strategy to promote peace and progress in our frontier regions. This involves military, political, economic and administrative components. The objective of the strategy is to win the hearts and minds of the local population and to isolate the militants from the moderates. The North Waziristan Agreement, concluded with tribal elders, was essentially an exchange of peace for development. While there may be room for better implementation, we believe the agreement represents a correct approach and the right strategy. The agreement has brought relative calm to the area. Activity from across the North Waziristan border has declined. Some assert that the total number of incidents inside Afghanistan have increased. But there is no proven direct co-relation of these incidents and the conclusion of the North Waziristan Agreement. Meanwhile, violations by some recalcitrant elements in North Waziristan have been adequately punished. Pakistan continues to retain the option of striking at terrorists where and when they are located, as we have demonstrated recently.

Mr. President,

16. We have advocated this approach of peace, reconciliation and development on the Afghanistan side as well. Similar agreements could be reached, through local Jirgas. They can offer a modality to establish relative, if not complete peace, in the South and Southeast of Afghanistan. This was the essence of the understanding at the tripartite Summit in Washington last September to promote the convening of Jirgas.

17. The first meeting of the Pakistan and Afghanistan Jirga Commissions was held last week in Islamabad. The two sides agreed to stop the blame game and increase cooperation to address common problems of border control and refugee repatriation.

18. Meanwhile, Pakistan believes there is a need to rapidly develop the areas on both sides of the border. For development of our tribal areas, we are grateful to the United States' commitment of \$750 million over the next 5 years. We would like to seek greater help from other sources as well for this vital objective.

19. We are also working with the United States for the establishment of Reconstruction Opportunity Zones in the tribal areas. Pakistan's private sector is investing in industry and manufacturing in these areas. The U.S. has promised special tariff and duty free access in the U.S. market for products from these areas. We ask the European Union to provide similar access. Similar ROZs could be established on the Afghan side as well. Pakistan stands willing to coordinate with Afghanistan to promote the creation of such Zones.

Mr. President,

20. In conclusion, let me say that Pakistan wants friendly relations with Afghanistan. Our destinies are inextricably bound together. We respect each others' sovereignty, we treat Afghanistan with equality and we would wish that both countries would respect each others' territorial integrity. Pakistan will continue to extend its cooperation to promote peace and stability in Afghanistan and combat terrorism in all its forms. We hope the Government of Afghanistan and others concerned will accept their own responsibilities to address the multiple challenges within Afghanistan. This is a collective endeavour and a joint responsibility. Political expediency and occasional frustrations over failure must not be allowed to wreck the cooperative framework that has been established, that is operational and that is so vital for success in Afghanistan.

-0-0-0-0-