



Statement By

His Excellency Hamid Karzai

President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

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Mr President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Since the last time we gathered here in this great hall, we have passed a year of great hopes and grave fears; we have witnessed the hope-inspiring glory of human accomplishment at the Olympic games in Beijing, but shuddered at crumbling stock and housing markets around the world; we have a growing global understanding on climate change issues, but seen millions of lives threatened by shortage of food in many countries and have witnessed with disbelief the brutal, wholesale slaughter of innocent people at the hands of terrorists in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Algeria and several other parts of the world.

Since I spoke at this podium in the last general assembly, my country Afghanistan has grappled with a number of important challenges, none more troubling than the problem of international terrorism. Terrorist forces have significantly increased their attacks and brutality and enjoyed freedom in their sanctuaries.

While Afghanistan has borne the brunt of terrorist violence, the scourge has now spread like a wildfire across the wider region. In Pakistan, where until recently extremist circles remained mainly focused on destabilizing Afghanistan, today terrorist violence is also directed within the Pakistani territory and against the Pakistani people. Daily acts of intimidation and violence against communities in Afghanistan and Pakistan in particular on both sides of the Durand Line; killing of political and tribal leaders and burning of schools are the upshots of the continued spawning and spread of terrorism and extremism in the region. The callous attack on the Marriot hotel in Islamabad over the weekend, the bombing of Indian Embassy in Kabul, and the terrorist attacks in the Indian cities of Bangalore and Ahmedabad were the most disturbing demonstration of terrorists' growing reach.

Undoubtedly, terrorism will not go away until we dismantle the elaborate institutional support terrorists enjoy in the region and eliminate their secure sanctuaries. This will be possible if we engage in a sincere regional and international cooperation.

The democratic transition in Pakistan, heralded by the historic elections of last February, has been a most promising development in our region.

We in Afghanistan have warmly welcomed the inauguration of the civilian, democratic government. In particular, I take the opportunity to once again congratulate my brother, President Asif Ali Zardari, on his election as the President of Pakistan. I assure my brothers, President Zardari and Prime Minister Gilani that Afghanistan stands ready to take several steps for each single step that Pakistan will take to address the challenge of radicalism and terrorism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To the extent that terrorism in our region continues to be a global threat, evolving in nature and tactics, the struggle against it must continue unabated. In this context, I recall with appreciation this year's NATO Summit in Bucharest, where around forty countries with existing military commitments in Afghanistan once again reiterated their strong resolve to stay the course.

Among the most significant outcomes of the Summit was the emphasis on Afghan-isation of the security sector as a measure to ensure sustainability and enhanced effectiveness.

To this end, I call for a redoubling of efforts by the international community aimed at enabling the Afghan national security institutions, both the Army and the Police, to take on a greater share of the war against terrorism and the protection of our people.

Above all, Afghan-i-sation of the military operations is vital if the problem of civilian casualties is to be addressed effectively. The continuation of civilian casualties can seriously undermine the legitimacy of fighting terrorism and the credibility of the Afghan people's partnership with the international community.

Mr President,

Whereas military endeavor at regional and international levels remains a primary response to the threat of terrorism, success will only be possible if the local population is empowered to confront it. Therefore, while terrorism and a persistent environment of insecurity are at work to subvert Afghanistan's economic growth, we must do what it takes to win the battle of Afghanistan's economic development. Last June, my Government launched the Afghanistan National Development Strategy at the Afghanistan Donors Conference in Paris.

If the pledges made at the Conference are translated into timely commitments, I am confident that we will attain the development goals set out in our strategy.

On behalf of the people of Afghanistan, I thank President Nicholas Sarkozy for his leadership in organization of the Paris Conference. I also thank the United States and all the other countries around the world who pledged generous financial contributions towards the implementation of Afghanistan's national development strategy.

Much like the security sector, Afghan-i-sation of the development process is key not just to the goal of ensuring ownership but also to the effective implementation of our development strategy. Afghan-i-sation of the development process can be achieved through a meaningful commitment by our friends and donors to aid effectiveness. In this context, while urging a shift from the use of parallel structures and wasteful mechanisms, I strongly endorse the role of the United Nations and the special representative of the Secretary General, Mr. Kai Eide, in coordinating the international community's participation in Afghanistan's development and state-building processes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thanks to the selfless sacrifices of your men and women and the determination and sacrifices of our own people, the journey of Afghanistan's reconstruction is resolutely apace. Today our people are more educated, healthier, better off, and more optimistic about their future. We have built thousands of new schools and reconstructed many more, where millions of our youngsters learn and prepare for the responsibilities of tomorrow. Our rapid economic growth, with a double digit growth rate almost every year, has resulted in higher income and better living conditions for our people. Our rural development programs have improved lives in thousands of villages that had never before seen an agent of the state in their midst.

We have also taken a number of legal and institutional measures to intensify our anti-corruption efforts by establishing the High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption including special units in the Office of the Attorney General and in the Judiciary to oversee efforts aimed at eliminating corruption through preventative, educational and enforcement measures. We are committed to ensuring more concrete results in the coming years.

On counter-narcotics, this year has registered a 20% decline in total opium production, while the number of poppy free provinces has reached to 18, making 50% of the country virtually poppy free. Keys to sustaining our success will be ensuring alternative livelihoods for our farmers, greater investment in law enforcement and interdiction and above all addressing the far greater dimensions of the world's drug trade that lie outside Afghanistan, such as reduction of demand in foreign markets and stricter border control.

Our efforts at counter narcotics, as well as in other areas, have been complicated by the acute shortage of food within the country. In collaboration with the United Nations, we have launched a humanitarian appeal that we hope will receive timely response from our partners in the international community.

Mr President,

The United Nations Charter promises freedom, justice, dignified life, security and peace, and it is incumbent on us all to work together to ensure that these promises are kept.

Today, there are still too many corners of the world where conflict and tensions are putting the lives and livelihoods of millions of people in jeopardy.

We deeply sympathize with our Palestinian brothers and sisters on their struggle and suffering. We urge a just and comprehensive settlement that fully realizes the rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to an independent state, living in peace with Israel.

Mr President,

Today, once again, this august assembly has brought us together at a time when our world is poised between great opportunities and menacing challenges. I am confident that we will make use of our growing, collective ability, as a community of civilised nations, to do what is right for the betterment of our world.

Thank you