

**Statement by
H.E. Mr. Mohammad Khazae
Permanent Representative of
the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations
on “the Situation in Afghanistan”
before the
United Nations Security Council**

14 October 2008, New York

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Mr. President,

Allow me to begin by congratulating you, both on your new assignment as the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations and also on your assumption of the Security Council’s presidency for this month. We extend our gratitude to the Secretary General and his Special Representative, Mr. Kai Eide, as well as all their colleagues in UNAMA for their firm commitment and valuable dedication to the consolidation of peace and stability in Afghanistan. The central role of the UN in coordinating international efforts in Afghanistan is of paramount importance and enjoys our full support.

Mr. President,

The latest report of the Secretary General on the situation in Afghanistan as well as the realities on the ground present us a mixed picture. On the one hand, we have been witnessing remarkable accomplishments by the government and the people of Afghanistan in various fields while, on the other, despite all these achievements still many daunting challenges such as insecurity, poppy cultivation, narcotic drugs production, drug trafficking and humanitarian crisis, among others, remain to be effectively tackled and continue to endanger the stability and development of Afghanistan along with that of the region and beyond.

It is of grave concern that, as indicated in the report at hand, the security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated. Increased terrorist attacks and violence in certain parts of Afghanistan, caused by the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other terrorist and criminal groups, coupled with the pervasive drug trade have created grave challenges. The increase in civilian casualties which is a result of terrorism and is also in part caused by the military operations by foreign forces is yet another concern preoccupying the people of Afghanistan and the international public opinion.

Mr. President,

The hearts and minds of the Afghan people who have gone through various forms of hardships and sufferings in the past few decades can not be won by solely relying on

military operations. Nor will it be possible by trying to appease the extremists and terrorists who will not be satisfied with any thing less than having the country back to the extremism that it had once experienced in the past. Rather, it will be achievable through making the ordinary Afghans feel the results of the help and support of the international community in their day to day lives, through reconstruction of infrastructures, capacity-building, training, education and development of important sectors such as the agricultural sector, among others. The recent increase in insecurity in Afghanistan well suggests that the attempts made to appease some extremist and terrorist groups by certain countries have been counterproductive and have only emboldened them. This is a matter of grave concern that may only bring a new phase of extremism to the region.

Furthermore, we are of the view that the Afghan National Army and Police should be more seriously strengthened, and the transfer of full national ownership of Afghans over the security of their country should be expedited, if the insecurity in Afghanistan is to be addressed effectively. An important step in that direction was the hand over, in August 2008, of the leading responsibility for security in Kabul to the national security forces led by the Afghan National Army. This important development should be built upon and followed by more steps.

Mr. President,

As indicated in the reports of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, crop yields have actually increased in Afghanistan in 2008, and the cultivation, production of, and trafficking in narcotic drugs, which adversely affect the security of that country have continued unabated. Undoubtedly, combating this menace requires a long-term and multifaceted strategy. The magnitude of the threat requires more resolute and coordinated efforts by Afghanistan and the international community. On its part, the Islamic Republic of Iran has spared no efforts to combat this threat, and I have explained our endeavors in this regard in my previous statements in the Council. While continuing this fight with unwavering determination, we expect the international community to join us and to get more seriously involved in this fight in order to save the peoples across the globe from the destructive impacts of this menace.

Mr. President,

Despite all the aforesaid concerns and uncertainties, one thing is, however, clear; that the government and people of Afghanistan continue to demonstrate their steadfast resolve not to bow to the difficulties they are facing, but to surmount them; and to work for a stable, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan. And in this regard they need the support of every one of us in the international community. The Paris Conference of June 2008 in which the Afghanistan National Development Strategy was launched, provided the world community with another opportunity to reassure the Afghans that as they continue on their journey towards stability, security and development; the international community stands with them offering its help and support. We concur with the report that Afghanistan National Development Strategy, together with the Paris Declaration, have

established a road map for future efforts by the Government of Afghanistan and the international community to bring about stability and development to Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

Iran, along with other neighboring countries and the world at large, has a vital interest in a secure, stable and prosperous Afghanistan, and in an Afghanistan which will be at peace with itself and with its neighbors. In the past six years we have spent more than 300 million dollars in helping Afghans rebuild and reconstruct their country, by mainly spending on building infrastructures and capacity building. As an example, and as mentioned in the report, the Islamic Republic of Iran has recently concluded memorandums of understanding with Afghanistan on bilateral trade, and has agreed to construct a teacher-training centre in Kabul, and also the Independent Directorate for Local Governance has signed an agreement with Iran to expand public service training.

Our country has also extended its hospitality to over 3 million Afghan nationals throughout the past three decades. At present there are about 950 thousand Afghan refugees that are registered in Iran, while there are also over a million Afghan nationals illegally living in our country. Throughout all these years, the afghan nationals have been, and continue to be, enjoying the educational and welfare facilities in Iran and have been and are benefiting from the same subsidies that our own people are enjoying.

It is our earnest hope that the international community will assist in the process of Afghan nationals returning to their home country and in helping create the conditions that would facilitate their voluntary repatriation in a more timely manner.

Thank you Mr. President.