

Please Check Against Delivery



**Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations**

**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**H.E. Hamid Karzai**

**President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan**

At the General Debate of the 67<sup>th</sup> Session  
of the  
United Nations General Assembly

25 September 2012

New York

Mr. President,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Every year our gathering in this prestigious hall is a manifestation of our faith in the fundamental equality of nations, as well as the continued relevance of the United Nations as the key international forum for achieving a safer, more secure and prosperous world. The General Assembly is a unique opportunity to engage in sincere and result-oriented dialogue with a view to addressing the challenges that confront us all.

As we speak today, the world is shaken by the depravity of fanatics who have committed acts of insult against the faith of over 1.5 billion Muslims. We strongly condemn these offensive acts, whether it involves the production of a film, the publication of cartoons, or indeed any other acts of insult and provocation. Such acts can never be justified as freedom of speech or expression. Equally, they cannot give reason for the genuine protests to be used to incite violence and chaos with terrible losses of innocent lives.

It is a matter of grave concern that our world remains strewn by daily occurrence of violence, hatred, and injustice. In particular, the menace of Islamophobia is a worrying phenomenon that threatens peace and co-existence among cultures and civilizations. I call upon leaders in the West, both politicians and the media, to confront Islamophobia in all its many forms and manifestations.

It is incumbent upon us all to advance the cause of dialogue and cooperation, to fight the forces of division and hatred and to fulfill the promise of a better and brighter future for coming generations. We must work to defeat the protagonists of the conflict of civilizations, and support the voices of tolerance and understanding.

Mr. President,

My country Afghanistan is testament to the benefits of multi-lateral cooperation and international solidarity. It was a little over a decade ago when many countries from across the world joined the Afghan people in our struggle for peace and against the forces of extremism and terrorism.

At the time, Afghanistan was a country decimated in all regards. For decades, we had suffered unnoticed from violence, deprivation, and from sinister foreign interference. Long before terrorism struck the world as a common security threat, Afghans were the victims of the atrocity of terrorist networks from different parts of the world that had made Afghanistan their haven.

Looking back to ten years ago, Afghanistan has transformed remarkably. Democracy has taken root; health services are accessible to the majority of the population, in all corners of the country; millions of students – boys and girls – are enrolled in primary and higher education.

Our achievements have not come about easily, and the true aspirations of the Afghan people for peaceful, prosperous lives are yet to be realized. As the world's fight against terrorism continues unabated, the Afghan people continue to pay the biggest price any nation has paid – in both life and treasure.

Terrorism is not rooted in the Afghan villages and towns – it never was. Its sources and its support networks all exist beyond Afghanistan's borders. Therefore, while the international community's security is being safeguarded from the threat of terrorism, the people of Afghanistan must no longer be made to pay the price and endure the brunt of the war.

It is in deference to the immense sacrifices of the Afghan people, and the precious lives lost from the international community, that the campaign against terrorism must be taken to the sources of terrorism and must be result-oriented.

Mr. President,

Today in Afghanistan, we pursue the cause of peace and an end to violence as a matter of great urgency. Peace being the utmost desire of the Afghan people, and convinced that military effort alone is not an adequate strategy to bring security, we have initiated the peace and reconciliation process which aims to bring all elements of the armed opposition to peaceful lives in the society.

Last year this month, my attendance at the UNGA was cut short *by* the tragic assassination of Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani, the then Chairman of the High Peace Council. His life was taken by a terrorist who posed as a peace emissary, and by doing so dealt our peace process a serious blow. This year, however, I am proud that late Professor Rabbani's son, Mr Salahuddin Rabbani, who has stepped up to take the Chair of the HPC, is part of my delegation in New York.

As I have repeated often-times, my hand of peace and reconciliation remains extended not only to the Taliban but also to all other armed opposition groups who wish to return to dignified, peaceful and independent lives in their own homeland. What we ask of them in return is simple: an end to violence, cutting ties with terrorist networks, preserving the valuable gains of the past decade, and respecting our Constitution.

To help facilitate the peace process, I ask of the United Nations Security Council to extend its full support to our efforts. In particular, I urge the 1988 Taliban's Sanctions Committee to take more active measures towards delisting of Taliban leaders as a step to facilitate direct negotiations.

In pursuing the path of peace, we remain hopeful for the critical role that our neighbor, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, has to play. Over the recent years, we have engaged our friends in Pakistan in a close dialogue in support of the Afghan peace process. It is a dialogue that, we believe, is critical for Pakistan's own security, and the security of the wider region and beyond.

We are deeply committed to our brotherly relations with Pakistan, but are aware of the challenges that may strain our efforts at building trust and confidence. Such incidents as the recent shelling of Afghan villages risk undermining the efforts by both governments to work together in the interest of our common security.

Mr President,

During the past two years, our national priority has been to have Afghanistan's own security forces assume full security responsibility. The Transition Process will be completed by mid 2013 and NATO and ISAF forces withdrawn from the country by end of 2014.

Apart from advancing Transition and pursuing the peace process, the past year has been one of significant progress for consolidating international commitment and partnership.

In Chicago last May, we received the long-term commitment by NATO and other countries for the training, equipping and ensuring the sustainability of Afghanistan's national security forces. In Tokyo this past July, the international community reaffirmed strong commitment to Afghanistan's social and economic development during the Transformation Decade, for which we are grateful.

The "mutual accountability framework," adopted in Tokyo, sets in place a clear structure for a more result oriented partnership and cooperation. We welcome the international community's readiness to align aid with our national priorities and channel assistance through the Afghan budget. On our part, we reiterated our determination to improve governance and to collaborate with our international partners to wipe out the cancer of corruption – whether it is in the Afghan government or the international aid system.

Mr. President

We recognize that Afghanistan's destiny is tied to the region that surrounds it - whether in face of our common threats, such as terrorism, extremism, and narcotics, or the opportunities we must grasp to grow and prosper. In this context, the Istanbul Process presents a new agenda for security, confidence-building and cooperation across the region of which Afghanistan is the centre. We will spare no effort to build strong and lasting relations with our neighbors –near and extended.

Mr President,

Turning to the international arena, Afghanistan views the situation in Syria with much concern. For over a year now, the thousands of our Syrian brothers and sisters have lost their lives due to an escalating cycle of violence. We welcome the appointment of the new Joint UN-Arab League Special Envoy for Syria, Lakhdar Brahimi. We know from Mr. Brahimi's well-respected role in Afghanistan, that he brings with him vast experience and a unique ability to the task before him.

The continuing plight of the Palestinian people has been a deep source of distress for Afghanistan and the rest of the international community. The people of Palestine have suffered immensely, for far too long. We remain in full support of the realization of the rights of our brothers and sisters in Palestine, including their right to an independent Palestinian State. The time has come for an end to the occupation, and for realizing a just, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the conflict, based on the relevant resolutions of the UN General Assembly and Security Council.

And finally, the UN reform remains an important agenda at the international level. Since its inception in 1945, the UN has exercised a key role in promoting a safer and more secure world, improving the lives of citizens worldwide, and safeguarding and promoting human rights. Nevertheless, in view of our ever-changing world, we cannot negate the fact that this organization is in dire need of a comprehensive reform, enabling it to better reflect the new challenges and realities of our time. The reform of the UN Security Council is an issue long overdue. Achieving a reformed Council that is more inclusive, representative and transparent must remain a priority; and we welcome the ongoing progress within the framework of the inter-governmental negotiations (IGN).

Thank you.