



Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

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STATEMENT

BY

H.E. Dr. Abdullah Abdullah

Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

At the 70th Session of United Nations General Assembly

28 September 2015

NEW YORK

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure on behalf of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to express my sincere congratulations on your well-deserved election as President of the Seventieth Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I also express my deep gratitude to the Secretary General of the United Nations, H.E. Ban Ki-moon, for his hands-on leadership of the organization at a very demanding time.

Mr. President,

The state of the world today, 70 years after the founding of this unique organization, is at best a mixed one. While, the newly formed UN Charter asserted its primary principle as the maintenance of international peace and security post World War II, today, a set of menaces - mostly human-made – challenge human societies across the world, and pose a threat to human security, basic rights and dignity, our eco-system, healthcare, state viability, governance, national and community cohesiveness, and even cultural and religious identity.

However, it also poses a serious challenge to the UN's existing mandate, structure, resources, and traditional approaches to dealing with global issues. The organization has tried its best to keep up and adapt to an evolving environment, but if we look at the past seven decades, we see that our predecessors did their best to deal with a litany of conflict-related crises, arms races, social and economic upheavals, ideological contests and geo-strategic rivalries.

But never has the world and the UN faced such fast-paced change – both constructive and harmful – such abrupt fluctuations, heightened expectations and immediate demands for solutions and answers.

These monumental tasks mixed with population growth, unprecedented mobility, connectivity and access to information and technological knowhow, necessitate constant negotiations, legal frameworks, new management and leadership skills, but also encompass inherent risks and security concerns.

As we expand the horizons of democratic governance, and privacy and human rights, we also face challenges from criminality, cyber hacking and unwarranted intrusion. It is only through discourse, dialogue and agreements that we can address these 21st century demands.

At the same time, as the world shrinks, and the human village grows, we are faced with the ugly sides of globalization and inter-dependence. We are seeing the emergence of haves and have-not

societies and sub-groups, disenfranchised communities, abject poverty, upscale corruption, injustice and repression, sectarianism, terrorism and criminality as just some examples.

At some point, it is the UN and other specialized and multilateral organizations that will need to be ready to drive the agenda and provide the required platform for decision-making. We urge future reforms to take these needs of our times into account and offer flexibility and fast-track problem management for the work at hand.

Mr. President,

Allow me to dwell on the case of my own country as a prime example of a nation in transition, as well as of a country exposed to multiple risks and threats at the forefront of our combat against international terrorism and extremism.

Afghanistan is suffering and its people demand solutions that are practical, verifiable and durable. The presence of terrorist sanctuaries and support networks in Pakistan continue to cause trouble inside Afghanistan. The Haqqani network has been identified as a main culprit and needs to be dismantled as has been our demand in the past.

Our demands are legitimate as our people continue to suffer at the hands of terrorist elements who cross into Afghanistan and indiscriminately victimize our citizens. This matter can be addressed on a bilateral basis, and facilitated by trusted international partners.

As a case in point, over the past 48 hours, hundreds of militants, some of whom are foreign fighters, organized attacks in Kunduz province, where heavy fighting is raging. The day before, more than 10 spectators at a sports match were killed and many more injured in Paktika, when a bomb was detonated.

These attempts will eventually fail to subdue us, as they have on other occasions over the past few years. In the larger context, Afghanistan continues to be the victim of terrorist organizations and violent extremists, including Daesh (ISIL) type cells trying to find a foothold. Another fact is clear to Afghans across the board: were it not for external support systems, access to arms and munitions, rest areas and hospitals, and funding and training, as part of strategic collusion with powerful elements in our neighborhood, this guerrilla style low-intensity warfare would have been history by now.

We call on Pakistan to do what its leadership promised to us a few months ago when they agreed to crack down on known terror outfits - meaning the enemies of Afghanistan. We agreed to a paradigm change in our relations and engagement towards peace talks with the Taliban. Events turned out differently after it was divulged that the Taliban leader had been dead for over two

years and the episode was a sham. A loss of trust can have irreparable consequences for all sides. We need to learn from that.

We also call on regional stakeholders and our international partners to realize the gravity of the situation, and use their good offices or any effective means to support our aspirations for a genuine and durable confidence-building process leading to talks with willing Taliban and other armed opposition groups.

Mr. President,

We have reached the one year mark for the anniversary of the National Unity Government and I am delighted to report to this assembly that Afghanistan has achieved significant milestones in the past year.

Thanks to the exemplary generosity of our friends, progress made in Afghanistan over the last 14 years cannot be discounted. We succeeded in prioritizing the needs of the most vulnerable, improve living standards, provide access to education to boys and girls, and improve healthcare quality. Life expectancy has increased by an average of 20 years since 2001, with Afghans living well beyond the mere 40 years of age that had once been their norm. Improvements in the health of women and children is particularly notable, as illustrated by the 54 percent increase in the number of infants delivered, and the decrease of infant mortality by 62 percent.

Through the focus on gender equality, equity, and equal opportunity adapted by the Government, female political participation has also been strengthened. During the 2014 election, voters comprised of 35 percent females. Women now claim 11 percent of judgeships, with an additional 20 percent in training.

Moreover, we are also strengthening laws and regulations that deal with torture and are taking necessary measures to prevent and prosecute individuals involved in any form of torture per the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture.

Mr. President,

We sincerely thank the international community for the exemplary support they have provided, and for the generosity and patience they have so tirelessly bestowed upon us as a war-torn nation. A very special mention to the US, NATO, EU and all donor communities for the blood of their soldiers, sacrifices of their civilian workers, and their expertise and encouragement.

Mr. President,

The recently escalating security issues – as mentioned earlier –have slowed down state building and overall progress. But our national security forces, through their patriotism and resilience have demonstrated that they are ready to face the challenges posed by the Taliban and other terrorist and violent extremist groups.

Furthermore, President Ghani and I prioritized a comprehensive reform agenda to root out corruption from our society and institutions, and to promote transparency and efficacy at all levels of government, the judiciary and at the national and sub-national levels. An important component of our reform agenda has to do with necessary changes in the work of our electoral institutions to strengthen credibility and integrity of our future elections. In this respect, the reform commission recently presented a comprehensive set of recommendations, on which we will take appropriate action for implementation. We are confident that these efforts will go a long way in the consolidation of participatory democracy in our country.

In addition to security challenges, the menace of the illicit drug trade in Afghanistan is having an adverse impact on the economy and society. However, we have a new comprehensive Action Plan to combat the drug economy more effectively. We appreciate the contributions made by donors, especially the United States and assistance provided by the UNODC. We are determined to meet the 10-year long goal of defeating narcotics once and for all.

Regional cooperation on the drug problem is another key pillar of our strategy. Beyond cooperation on counter narcotics, the Unity Government is committed to enhancing regional engagement and building constructive relationships based on win-win formulas, and turning Afghanistan into a connectivity hub for energy, trade, transit, transport, pipelines and fiber. The 6th RECCA conference in Kabul recently successfully agreed to work on ways to develop and consolidate partnerships towards promoting regional economic cooperation and integration in Afghanistan and across the region.

We are already seeing success stories take shape such as the CASA 1000 energy transfer project, and the TAPI pipeline, turning Afghanistan into a land bridge connecting China and India through South Asia and Central Asia to the Middle East and Europe.

While working on the remainder of the MDG targets, my Government has strong political will to implement, with the support of the international community, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Mr. President,

I would like to add Afghanistan's voice in support of a reformed Security Council that is more inclusive, representative and transparent. As most member states agree that the UNSC is in dire need of comprehensive reforms to better confront 21st century challenges.

Mr. President,

My Government supports the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. We reiterate our long-standing position that a two-State solution offers the best guarantee for a long-term and sustainable solution to the conflict.

In addition, I would like to add my strongest condemnation for the terrible acts against humanity committed by all sides in Syria, especially ISIS. The people of Syria and Iraq are suffering, and as a war ravaged country we feel their pain, dispossession and trauma. I call upon the global community to take prompt and urgent action and facilitate a political solution through talks.

Mr. President, We look to the UN to remain beside us for years to come on our journey into the Transformation Decade. Having said that, we expect a strategic re-alignment in the international community's support role, and that of the UN's, as we move forward.

In that connection, we welcome the outcome of the work of the Tripartite Review Commission to determine the guiding principles of the UN's future engagement in Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, let me reiterate my Government's steadfast commitment to promoting the very principles on which the United Nations was founded. We are confident that with the continued support of the family of nations represented in this noble organization, we will realize our shared goal of peaceful, stable and prosperous nation that is a catalyst for security and prosperity in our region and beyond.

Thank you.