Statement

by
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to the United Nations
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in the
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The situation in Afghanistan

[37]

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(check against delivery)
Mr. President, distinguished colleagues,

It is an honor for my country to introduce this year's draft resolution on the “Situation in Afghanistan.”

2014 was a year marked by seminal developments in Afghan domestic and foreign politics. The draft resolution before us today reflects these key developments in Afghanistan in all their facets. Despite the variety of topics worthy of our attention I will limit myself to briefly highlighting a few key developments today.

Afghanistan has successfully concluded its presidential and provincial council elections. For the first time in Afghanistan's history power was peacefully transferred from one administration to another by a democratic process. On 29 September, President Ghani was inaugurated and will, together with the Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Abdullah, form the Government of National Unity.

The Afghan people, men and - most encouragingly - millions of women, have shown tremendous courage in making use of their constitutional right to cast their vote, defying the Taliban's threats to attack the election process.

We commend the United Nations and the Secretary-General's Special Representative for the critical support they provided to the Afghan electoral institutions during this process. Germany, along with other partners from the international community, also supported this process with substantial contributions.

Mr President,

It is now essential that both Afghanistan’s President and the CEO continue to work together closely on a basis of mutual trust to tackle the many challenges lying ahead for Afghanistan. Electoral reform and the strengthening of electoral institutions as well as constitutional reforms are at the core of the agreement to establish a Government of National Unity and must be addressed in a timely manner. Economic reforms need to be tackled swiftly to foster economic growth and create job opportunities for the benefit of the entire population. Severe budgetary constraints and the volatile security situation demand effective decision-making processes by the Government of National Unity. As Foreign Minister Steinmeier underlined during his recent visit to Afghanistan, all actors in the Government of National Unity must embrace their responsibility for the future of Afghanistan and continue to set aside personal ambitions.

Secondly, the draft resolution reflects the remarkable shift in the security transition which Afghanistan and its international partners are approaching. In less than six weeks, ISAF will draw to a close and the Afghan National Security Forces will assume full responsibility for providing security to the Afghan people. Since the inception of the transition process, the Afghan National Army and Police have continuously improved their capacities and have proven increasingly capable of responding to security challenges, although at high cost. Challenges still remain and the achievements made so far are not yet irreversible.

Mr President,
The resolution therefore underlines the international community’s resolve to further support the Afghan security forces beyond transition. At the Wales Summit, NATO and NATO partner countries renewed their commitment to continue their support to the ANSF. Upon the invitation of the Government of Afghanistan, they will establish the Resolute Support Mission at the beginning of 2015 to train, assist and advise the ANSF. They will contribute to the financial sustainment of the Afghan security forces and they committed themselves to strengthening the long-term Enduring Partnership with Afghanistan. The German Government has also offered to continue supporting the Afghan security forces.

We commend the new Government of Afghanistan for expeditiously signing the Bilateral Security Agreement with the United States and the Status of Forces Agreement with NATO – necessary preconditions for the continued support of the international community.

Mr President,

In London later this year, Afghanistan and its international partners will meet to refresh the long-term commitment of the international community throughout the Transformation Decade. This commitment declared by the Government of Afghanistan and its international partners at the Bonn Conference of 2011 and reaffirmed at the Tokyo Conference in 2012 rests firmly upon the principle of mutual accountability.

Building on this unique framework, the international community has pledged 16 billion US dollars through 2015 in support of the economic and political stabilization of Afghanistan. In addition, it has committed itself to sustain its support at or near the levels of the past decade through 2017, in line with the principles of aid effectiveness. The Afghan Government, in return, has committed itself to achieving its governance and development goals in a more determined manner.

During the past decade, Afghanistan has, indeed, achieved remarkable progress in a variety of areas, including health, education and infrastructure. However, continued efforts are of paramount importance to protect and advance the gains made in past years.

As reflected in the resolution, preserving and consolidating gains in the protection and promotion of human rights and the equal participation of men and women in all spheres of Afghan life remains critical. Good governance and the fight against corruption need to be strengthened - objectives to which the new Afghan President has committed himself in his inaugural speech.

Finally, the Heart of Asia Process, aiming to enhance regional cooperation and dialogue, has been taken a step forward by the most recent Ministerial Conference in Beijing in October. As a supporting country to this Process, Germany is looking forward to progress in tapping the Process’s full potential to foster trust and cooperation in the region until the next Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia Process which the Government of Pakistan has generously offered to host.

Mr President,
These watershed developments suggest that the long-term partnership between Afghanistan and the international community is evolving. It is essential to understand, however, that redefining this very relationship should reinforce it. This is also the core message of the resolution before us today.

The new Afghan government assumed its duties only a few weeks ago. It faces tremendous challenges and the Government of National Unity has clearly stated – and already demonstrated - its determination to tackle these challenges with vigor. We are confident that this resolve to improve the lives of Afghan citizens will guide the government in its work. By adopting this resolution today, once again by consensus, the General Assembly will reaffirm its commitment to a prosperous and peaceful future for Afghanistan and send a strong message of support to the Afghan Government and people.

Mr President,

To conclude, I would like to express my gratitude to all delegations who participated in this year’s informal consultations and in particular to my distinguished colleague, Ambassador Tanin, and his team for their dedication and close cooperation.

Thank you very much.