Mr. President,

Afghanistan is on the cusp of a historic change. In that context, today’s debate and this year’s resolution on Afghanistan are most timely.

Pakistan appreciates the facilitation of the resolution on Afghanistan by Germany. Pakistan has co-sponsored the resolution.

We pay tribute to the outgoing Special Representative of the Secretary General on Afghanistan, Mr. Jan Kubis. He did an outstanding job as a leader, as a mediator, and as a conciliator. His benign presence and wise counsel in Afghanistan raised the stature of the UN and helped the country
move towards democratic transition, peace and stability. We thank him for working closely with the leadership of Pakistan.

We congratulate Mr. Nicholas Haysom over his appointment as the new Special Representative and look forward to working with him.

Mr. President,

We congratulate the people of Afghanistan over the elections and a peaceful democratic transition. This was a historic first. Pakistan supported the electoral process through enhancing security on the border with Afghanistan.

Pakistan's relationship with the new Government of National Unity in Afghanistan started on a high note. President Mamnoon Hussain attended the inauguration of President Ashraf Ghani. Mr. Sartaj Aziz, Adviser on National Security and Foreign Affairs, visited Kabul to set the tone for a comprehensive and enduring partnership.
President Ashraf Ghani's visit last week marked a holistic renewal of our relationship.

A peaceful, stable, united and prosperous Afghanistan is in Pakistan’s vital interest. Our nations are joined by the bonds of common faith, kinship and history.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif outlined his vision of a multi-tiered bilateral engagement at the political, security, economic, and cultural levels.

Pakistan and Afghanistan have resolved to forge robust economic partnerships to expand trade, promote investment, improve infrastructure, build road and rail links and generate energy.

We also envisage collaboration with Afghanistan on reconstruction, border security and defense, capacity-building, education, and parliamentary exchanges.
We envision a peaceful neighborhood, connected by trans-regional initiatives like the Central Asia-South Asia Electricity Transmission Project CASA-1000 and the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline.

I have shared details of the recent engagement between Pakistan and Afghanistan to reassure the UN Secretary General that our two countries are, what he chose to call, "resetting" our relationship and increasing the space for cooperation in all areas, particularly in the areas of security and counter-terrorism, including activation of interaction the military and intelligence tracks.

**Mr. President,**

The focus is now rightly shifting to a managed security transition in Afghanistan to pave the way for internal stability and economic development. Past mistakes of abandoning Afghanistan should not be repeated.
We welcome Afghanistan’s Bilateral Security Agreement with the US and the Status of Forces Agreement with NATO. We agree with the Secretary General that Afghanistan's security institutions will require substantial assistance for years to come. In this context, sustainment of the Afghan forces is important.

The Secretary General has highlighted the plight of the civilians who are caught in the cross-fire, with an increase in the number of deaths and injuries. In the post-2014 period, domestic and international terrorist networks, insurgents, and criminal groups should not be allowed to push Afghanistan towards a deeper internecine strife.

Intra-Afghan reconciliation remains the keystone for creating conditions for sustainable peace and stability in Afghanistan. An inclusive, Afghan-led and Afghan-owned reconciliation process, that the new government is initiating, is imperative for national unity and progress. Pakistan stands ready to support that process.
Mr. President,

Pakistan and Afghanistan jointly face the threats of terrorism and violent extremism, transnational crime and a precarious security environment. We will counter these threats with a strong common resolve and coordinated endeavors.

Non-state actors should not be allowed to dictate Pak-Afghan bilateral relations. Our relationship must be based on mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and marked by trust and cooperation.

On our side, we are prosecuting Operation Zarb-e-Azb to take out terrorists and take down their networks. There is zero tolerance for them. Our nation and our valiant armed forces are determined to fight this war to the finish.

There are no bad or good terrorists. Terrorists are criminals, plain and simple. Action is being taken against them, without distinction and
differentiation. The soil of Pakistan will be cleansed of the scourges of terrorism and violent extremism.

Action on the other side of the border would ensure the annihilation of the toxic ideology of terrorism and the operatives who implement its dark agenda. In this regard, we appreciate the steps being taken by the Afghan government for simultaneous operations on the Afghan side of the border to address specific security situations.

Mr. President,

The Secretary General’s last report on Afghanistan expressed grave concern at the economic situation, especially a precipitous drop in growth and a decline in investor confidence. We hope that pledges made under the Tokyo Mutual Assistance Framework (TMAF) would materialize to stimulate growth at the local, regional and national levels. This is critical for continued stability.
We look forward to continued international commitments to Afghanistan at the London Conference next month.

The Secretary General’s report also refers to the "booming illicit economy" in Afghanistan that is both a symptom and a source of uncertainty. We hope that the new Afghan Government and the international community would work with a renewed political resolve to counter the narcotics trade and promote development priorities to strengthen the licit economy.

We are encouraged by President Ashraf Ghani’s decision to give priority to refugees. More than three million documented and undocumented refugees still continue to live on Pakistan's soil, while the international assistance for them has been dwindling over the years. We are hosting the largest, single country, chronic refugee caseload. Despite constraints on Pakistan’s resources, we have
extended the refugees’ stay in Pakistan till the end of 2015. Three steps are necessary to deal with the refugees in Pakistan: (i) UNHCR must enhance its assistance; (ii) the international donor community which would help the new government rebuild and reconstruct Afghanistan should earmark resources for the rehabilitation and repatriation of refugees; and (iii) the Afghan government itself, in its planning, should pay special attention to livelihoods and housing to absorb returning refugees.

Mr. President,

We are committed to regional stability through cooperation and connectivity.

We commend China for a successful meeting of the Heart of Asia process last month. Pakistan will have the pleasure of hosting the next meeting in 2015.

Mr. President,
In 1930, Pakistan’s poet philosopher Allama Iqbal characterized Afghanistan as “Qalb-e-Asia” – the “Heart of Asia”. He wrote and I translate: “Asia is comparable to a living body. The heart that beats inside the body is the homeland of Afghans. The destruction of Afghanistan would be destruction of Asia. In its progress and prosperity lies the well-being of Asia”.

More than eight decades later, these verses still hold true.

Mr. President,

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif conveyed to President Ashraf Ghani last week that Pakistan would stand by Afghanistan to support its endeavours for peace and progress, as it is about to commence its decade of transformation.

We remain committed to this vision.
I thank you.