STATEMENT BY
AMBASSADOR ASOKE K. MUKERJI,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
AT THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
DEBATE ON
"THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN"

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Mr. President,

At the outset, let me thank you for organizing this discussion in the General Assembly on 'The Situation in Afghanistan'. I would also like to commend the German delegation for coordinating inter-governmental negotiations in an excellent manner that has led us to this annual General Assembly resolution. India is happy to co-sponsor this resolution as we have done in the last several years, which is traditionally adopted by consensus.

Mr. President,

2. I wish to congratulate the people of Afghanistan for the new National Unity Government led by President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Dr. Abdullah Abdullah.

3. The Afghan people showed great patience and forbearance during the recent months that gave the much needed political space and time to the two Presidential candidates and their supporters to work through the elements that has made the National Unity Government Agreement possible.

4. This patience and forbearance is yet another testimony of the strong public support in Afghanistan for a democratic political system and for preserving the gains in political political reconstruction made over the last 13 year. It is also testimony to their fierce determination to vanquish terrorism and extremism.

5. I have no doubt that both President Ghani and CEO Abdullah will keep this in mind as they undertake the difficult tasks that lie ahead of them - this includes the rapid formation of a new Afghan Government in keeping with the National Unity Government Agreement, as also the task of electoral reforms and organizing a Constitutional Loya Jirga that they have set themselves.

Mr. President,

6. Despite the great efforts and sacrifices of both international troops, and the personnel of the ANSF, the evil scourge of terrorism and extremism has continued to threaten Afghanistan's peace and stability.

7. That such terrorist and extremists groups continue to survive despite the immense military pressure brought on them only underscores the fact that they have continue to benefit from support from beyond Afghanistan, and also access resources from transnational terrorist and criminal networks.

8. It is only if the support stops and the linkages with networks broken, that the scourge of terrorism will be defeated.

Mr. President,

9. Reconciliation of members of the erstwhile Taliban regime is an integral part of the efforts of national reconciliation that are being undertaken by the Government of Afghanistan.
10. A successful national Reconciliation program must be transparent, led by the Afghan Government and owned by the Afghan people, respecting the Afghan constitution and the international red lines. This would require sincere cooperation of all parties concerned.

Mr. President,

11. Afghanistan is also entering a new phase in its economic transition. In today's global economic situation when our government budgets are strained, and when the sentiment of "aid fatigue" exists in most traditional donor countries, a successful Afghan private sector holds the key to a successful economic transition in Afghanistan.

12. As a lead country of the Trade Commerce and Investment CBM under the Istanbul process, India has gained some experience on this issue.

13. One of the consistent messages we are receiving from private sector businesses serious about entering the Afghan market, is that while security is an issue that can at times be managed, Afghanistan's lack of connectivity to sea Ports and to faster growing economic regions of Asia is a significant constraint.

14. India has been in discussion with the Governments of Iran and Afghanistan to see how we can collaborate on a project to develop Iran's Chahbahar Port that would improve Afghanistan's access to the sea and provide a significant boost to economic reconstruction activities in the western parts of Afghanistan. We hope that similarly other connectivity enhancing projects for Afghanistan will be undertaken by the international community and will henceforth be seen as priority area in our collective efforts to assist Afghanistan's economic reconstruction program. President Ghani has taken a lead, and his efforts need reciprocation in full measure.

Mr. President,

15. This is a critical decade of transformation for Afghanistan. India is proud to call itself Afghanistan's first strategic partner. We share the Afghan people's vision of a strong, independent, united and prosperous Afghanistan for which so many Afghans have sacrificed so much.

16. India will always do whatever is possible within our capacities and our means, to work with the Afghan Government and its peoples to realize this great vision. Afghanistan also needs the international community's unwavering support.

I thank you, Mr. President

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