Madam/Mr President

The resolution before us appropriately recognises the major milestones reached this year in Afghanistan. It also recognises continuing security, economic and development challenges, and the continuing vital importance of effective partnering with the international community.

The September inauguration of President Ghani, and the establishment of a government of national unity with Dr Abdullah as CEO marked the first democratic transfer of power in Afghanistan’s history.

Australia applauds the millions of Afghans who demonstrated their dedication to a democratic future, and who braved a very real threat of violence to vote in two election rounds. This was a truly historic achievement.
We urge President Ghani and CEO Dr Abdullah to continue to work in a spirit of cooperation: stable, committed and inclusive government is in the interests of all Afghan people and is essential to protect the gains of the past decade.

The Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) assumed the lead role for providing security over a year ago and are on track to assume full responsibility for security by the end of 2014. The ANSF delivered security for Afghanistan’s elections, and now lead 99 per cent of conventional and special operations.

An effective and sustainable ANSF is fundamental to Afghanistan’s long-term stability, but will require continued assistance to build its capacity.

The NATO-led non-combat Resolute Support mission will continue to train, advise and assist the ANSF. Australia will participate in Resolute Support, and will contribute US$100 million a year from 2015 to 2017 for ANSF sustainment. We look to the Afghan Government to ensure that support from the international community is used effectively.

As Afghanistan moves towards greater self-reliance, economic growth must be a priority for the Government. Growth must be broad-based, widening inequality should be addressed, and women should be empowered to participate fully in Afghanistan’s economy. Importantly, it will need to be underpinned by sound policies that facilitate commerce and investment, and a regulatory framework that provides transparency and confidence.

The new Government has already started to deliver on much-needed reforms. The re-opening of the investigation into fraud against the Kabul Bank is an early and important demonstration of the new administration’s strong stance against corruption.

Afghanistan has come a long way on human rights. The Afghan Constitution now enshrines equal rights for men and women. Three million Afghan girls now attend school, compared to virtually none in 2001. In this year’s elections, millions of Afghan women exercised their right to vote and many nominated for office.

Australia welcomes the recent establishment of Afghanistan’s National Women’s Advisory Council. This positive momentum must continue. We look to Afghanistan to ensure full implementation of the Elimination of Violence Against Women Law, and to finalise and implement a National
Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security to ensure women have a role in the peace and reconciliation process.

As a strong supporter of Afghanistan’s Independent Human Rights Commission, we were pleased by recent news that the Commission has retained its ‘A’ status following a review by the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions.

Since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, much has been achieved by Afghanistan with the support of the international community. We look to Afghanistan to continue building on its security, political, and economic transition, and to continue improvements in human rights. The international community remains committed to supporting Afghanistan in this endeavour.

The signing of the Bilateral Security Agreement with the US and the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with NATO provide the legal instruments which will allow Resolute Support Mission to continue supporting the ANSF as it provides security to the Afghan people.

The upcoming London Conference will provide an important forum to discuss continued development cooperation with Afghanistan within the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework.

And the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has a strong mandate to continue providing support to Afghanistan.

Afghanistan faces significant challenges on the road to a more peaceful and secure future. Australia, along with the international community, is committed to supporting Afghanistan. And we look to do this in close partnership with a responsive, transparent and accountable Afghan government.

We express our thanks to Germany for coordinating this General Assembly resolution on Afghanistan, and to Ambassador Tanin for his important contribution. With over [80] co-sponsors, including Australia, this resolution sends a strong message of continuing international support for Afghanistan. We look forward to its adoption by consensus.

Thank you.