



AFGHANISTAN

Statement by:

His Excellency Dr. Abdullah Abdullah

**Minister of Foreign Affairs of the
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan**

at the General Debate
of the 60th Session of the General Assembly

New York

21 September 2005

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President,

Allow me to extend my warm congratulations to you on your election as the President of the 60th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I am confident that the proceedings of the 60th Session, under your astute leadership, will be conducted in a fruitful manner. I would also like to extend my thanks and appreciation to your predecessor, H.E. Mr. Jean Ping, for the excellent manner in which he presided during the previous session, and the tireless efforts he rendered towards facilitating a consensus on the adoption of the Outcome Document.

Mr. President,

I have the honor to inform you and the distinguished members of this august assembly of the successful conclusion of the parliamentary and provincial elections that took place in my country just two days ago.

As stated by President Karzai, "the holding of these elections was a major success for the people of Afghanistan and a major defeat for those attempting to derail the political process." In defiance of the threats posed by the enemies of peace and stability in Afghanistan, millions of men and women enthusiastically traveled to polling stations to cast their votes. With the conclusion of these elections, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has now completed the final phase of the Bonn Agreement, sponsored by the United Nations in December 2001.

The determination and political will expressed by the people of Afghanistan have made possible the gradual, yet arduous, transition towards stability and democracy in Afghanistan. During the course of the transition, Afghanistan, successfully convened two Loya Jirgas, adopted a new constitution - enshrined with the principles of democracy -, held its first-ever Presidential elections, and most recently, concluded its parliamentary and provincial elections.

In this context, allow me to express, on behalf of the people and Government of Afghanistan, most sincere gratitude and appreciation to the United Nations, the NATO - led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), coalition forces, Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), international observers and other international partners for the assistance rendered towards achieving this objective.

Mr. President,

Allow me to briefly highlight some of the other achievements that have taken place during the past four years.

The Government of Afghanistan continues to make significant progress with regard to the reform of the security sector and the formation of the National Army and Police in order to further extend and consolidate authority throughout the country.

The Disarmament and Demobilization of 60,000 former combatants has been completed. In this regard, the Government of Afghanistan reaffirms its commitment to complete the reintegration of ex-combatants – as the final phase of a successful DDR process.

Significant progress has been made in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Our new constitution guarantees equal rights between men and women, freedom of expression; freedom of press and political pluralism.

The Independent Human Rights Commission has been institutionalized as an independent body, in accordance with our constitution. The Commission continues to fulfill its respective mandate.

We have also witnessed the enrollment of more than 5 million children - boys and girls - to school. The repatriation of millions of refugees from neighboring countries, during the past four years, has also taken place. It is also worth mentioning the significant increase in the role of women in the social, political and economic life of the country.

Mr. President,

The cultivation of opium poppy and production of narcotic drugs in Afghanistan remains a prime concern to my Government. The establishment of a counter-narcotics Ministry, the creation of a Special Tribunal to prosecute those associated with the cultivation, production and trafficking of illegal drugs and the formation of the Committee on Counter Narcotics – chaired by President Karzai – are only some of the initiatives taken by the Afghan Government aimed at combating and eliminating the scourge of narcotic drugs.

I am pleased to refer to the recent report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) which rightfully reflected the 21% decrease in the cultivation of opium poppy in Afghanistan during the current year. However, in order to build on this achievement, we must offer alternative livelihoods to rural communities. A successful strategy in combating illicit drugs requires additional measures aside from asking farmers to plant substitute crops. We have to provide them with agricultural assistance, invest in irrigation, build roads, and provide electric power and assistance in generating non-farm employment in rural areas.

Mr. President,

Much of the achievements realized in Afghanistan since the signing of the Bonn Agreement would not have been possible without the vigorous support of the international community. I take this opportunity to extend our deep gratitude to all

international partners, and lead nations who offered generous support throughout the process. In this context, we emphasize on the sustained engagement and support of the international community over the coming years for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the country, as well as the consolidation of peace and security.

Despite some of the achievements, to which I referred to earlier, the people of Afghanistan continue to face many challenges in their daily lives. Extreme poverty, high-rate of infant and maternal mortality and the lack of resources necessary to ensure basic social services continue to exist.

Mr. President,

The outcome document adopted on the 16th of September 2005 has laid the foundation for a more effective and efficient United Nations, better able to address the issues relating to development, peace and security, human rights, reform of the United Nations and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's).

The Government of Afghanistan welcomes the proposal adopted in the Outcome Document with regard to the establishment of a Peace-Building Commission. As a country emerging from years of conflict, Afghanistan fully realizes the need for a coordinated, coherent and integrated approach to post-conflict peace-building. My Government also supports the decision taken for the Commission to begin its work by no later than 31 December 2005.

Mr. President,

As a result of ongoing efforts by Afghanistan and the international community against international terrorism, my country no longer serves as a base for Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. However, the people of Afghanistan continue to suffer from the scourge of international terrorism. Terrorism remains as one of the main challenges to peace, stability and sustainable development in Afghanistan. The continued infiltration of Al-Qaeda and Taliban extremists in the south and parts of the east of the country remains a contributing factor to insecurity in my country.

Therefore, we reiterate the importance of a sincere commitment by all the countries of the region in the combat against this scourge.

The Government of Afghanistan, once again, vehemently condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

In this context, we support every effort aimed at the successful conclusion of the comprehensive convention on international terrorism by the end of the 60th Session of the General Assembly.

Furthermore, my Government is well aware of the negative effects posed by transnational organized crime, including smuggling and trafficking of human beings, narcotic drugs,

and small arms and light weapons on development, peace, security and human rights. Afghanistan supports all international, regional and sub-regional efforts towards the elimination of these crimes, in conformity with the related conventions of the United Nations.

The outcome document rightfully calls for the strengthening of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in order to provide assistance to member-states aimed at eliminating the production and trafficking of illicit drugs. Afghanistan is of the firm conviction that the combat against illicit drugs demands a coordinated international effort on the basis of shared responsibility.

While recognizing the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan would like to emphasize on the long due needed reform of the Council, so as to make it a more representative, transparent and effective organ of the United Nations. In this context, we also stress on the importance of improving the Council's working methods.

Mr. President,

The Secretary General clearly highlighted the inter-relation between development and security when he stated in his report: In Larger Freedom: and I quote: "There will be no development without security and no security without development". This case could not be any more relevant as it is in the case of Afghanistan.

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Afghanistan is not just a desirable humanitarian goal, but a necessity for the security of the country, the region and the world. Attaining these goals requires substantial amount of international aid in a coordinated and sustained manner.

My Government is in the process of preparing Afghanistan's National Development Strategy (ANDS), which will be presented at the Donor Conference on Afghanistan, scheduled to convene early next year. The national development strategy encompasses a clear approach to achieving our national development goals addressing vital areas such as capacity building, fiscal sustainability, building infrastructure and prioritizing projects.

The Afghanistan National Development Strategy will also present Afghanistan's overarching strategy for promoting growth and reducing poverty, as well as serve as the country's overall strategy for attracting international assistance.

The National Development Strategy will be prepared in a consultative process with all stakeholders, donors, civil society, private sector and provincial council's.

Through a post-Bonn compact, Afghanistan will subscribe to a new set of time tables and benchmarks for providing security, building democratic institutions, protecting human rights, reducing extreme poverty – in accordance with our MDG targets -, reforming the

administration, eliminating corruption, ending the production and trafficking of narcotic drugs and developing cooperation with our neighbors.

As a land-locked country, Afghanistan will not be able to achieve its intended economic goals without the support and mutual cooperation of its neighbors. The Government of Afghanistan emphasizes on the importance of regional economic cooperation for the benefit of all countries in the region. Trade plays a major role in promoting economic growth, employment and development for all. The volume of trade between Afghanistan and its neighbors has been growing steadily. Just last year, the estimated value of trade between Afghanistan and its neighbors amounted to 1.5 billion dollars.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, I would like to express Afghanistan's full commitment towards the implementation of the Outcome Document. We are of the conviction that the adoption of the historic document will further enhance the central role of the United Nations in addressing the threats and challenges facing humanity at the dawn of the 21st century.

Thank you Mr. President.