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Official Records

President: Mr. Ping (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Typhoon in the Philippines

The President (*spoke in French*): Before proceeding to the items on our agenda, I should like, on behalf of the members of the General Assembly, to extend our deep sympathy to the Government and people of the Philippines for the tragic loss of life and immense amount of material damage caused by the recent typhoon. I also express the hope that the international community will respond promptly and generously in solidarity to any request for help.

Mr. Baja (Philippines): On behalf of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and the people of the Philippines, I thank the General Assembly most profoundly for its expression of sympathy and solidarity with the Philippine people as they slowly emerge from the tragedy of death and the destruction of property and livelihood that occurred in the Philippines during the past weeks.

The Philippines is deeply indebted to those who have promptly responded to our urgent appeal for assistance. We thank the United Nations, particularly the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Development Programme, the World Health Organization and UNICEF, as well as Member States Australia, Belgium, Canada, the People's Republic of China, Germany, the Republic of Korea, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States, and also the European

Union for their rapid response in extending emergency assistance.

We deeply appreciate the gesture of the United States in sending an entire Marine Air Group based in Okinawa, Japan, composed of over 600 troops and more than a dozen medium- and heavy-lift helicopters and transport planes to assist in the ongoing relief efforts and in airlifting the sick and injured from areas that have been isolated by the disaster.

We also thank non-governmental organizations such as the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Oxfam, Médecins sans Frontières, Télécoms sans Frontières, Caritas, Catholic Relief Services, Church World Service, Christian Aid, World Vision, InterAction, Food for the Hungry, Action by Churches Together, and many others. We express our sympathy to the victims and our appreciation to other Governments for their expressions of sympathy.

Much still needs to be done in the coming days and weeks to help those affected to cope with the aftermath of the calamity. President Arroyo has reiterated an appeal for more assistance. We will need help in preventing the spread of diseases and in restoring power, communications and water services to the affected population. We will need all the help we can get in the reconstruction and post-disaster rehabilitation of the affected areas.

Once again, thank you.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Agenda item 17

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(a) Appointment of members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/59/582)

The President (*spoke in French*): The Fifth Committee, in paragraph 7 of its report, recommends that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2005: Mr. Ronald Elkhuisen (Netherlands), Mr. Jorge Flores Callejas (Honduras), Mr. Jerry Kramer (Canada), Ms. Sun Minqin (China), Mr. Rajat Saha (India) and Mr. Jun Yamazaki (Japan).

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint those persons I just mentioned as members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in French*): We turn now to the report of the Fifth Committee on sub-item (b) of agenda item 17, entitled "Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions", contained in document A/59/583.

In paragraph 6 of the report, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the Committee on Contributions for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2005: Mr. David Dutton (Australia), Mr. Paul Ekorong a Dong (Cameroon), Mr. Bernardo Greiver del Hoyo (Uruguay), Mr. Hassan Mohammed Hassan (Nigeria), Mr. Eduardo Héctor Iglesias (Argentina) and Mr. Eduardo Manuel da Fonseca Fernandes Ramos (Portugal).

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint those persons I just mentioned as members of the Committee on Contributions?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in French*): In paragraph 7 of the same report, the Fifth Committee also recommends that the General Assembly appoint Mr. Vyacheslav

Anatolievich Logutov (Russian Federation) as a member of the Committee on Contributions for a term of office beginning on 1 January 2005 and ending on 31 December 2005.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint this person I just mentioned as a member of the Committee on Contributions?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now invite members to turn their attention to the report of the Fifth Committee on sub-item (c) of agenda item 17, entitled "Confirmation of the appointment of members of the Investments Committee", contained in document A/59/584.

The Fifth Committee recommends in paragraph 5 of its report that the General Assembly confirm the appointment by the Secretary-General of the following persons as members of the Investments Committee for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2005: Mr. William McDonough (United States of America), Ms. Hélène Ploix (France) and Mr. Jürgen Reimnitz (Germany).

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to confirm the appointment of those persons I just mentioned as members of the Investments Committee?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in French*): In paragraph 6 of the same report, the Fifth Committee also recommends that the General Assembly confirm the appointment by the Secretary-General of Mr. Khaya Ngqula (South Africa) as a member of the Investments Committee for a term of office beginning in December 2004 and expiring on 31 December 2006.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to confirm the appointment of this person I just mentioned as a member of the Investments Committee?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in French*): May I now invite members to turn their attention to the report of the Fifth Committee on sub-item (d) of agenda item 17, entitled "Appointment of members of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal", contained in document A/59/585?

In paragraph 5 of its report, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint the

following persons as members of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal for a four-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2005: Mr. Goh Joon Seng (Singapore), Mr. Spyridon Flogaitis (Greece) and Ms. Brigitte Stern (France).

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint those persons I just mentioned as members of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in French*): We turn now to the report of the Fifth Committee on sub-item (e) of agenda item 17, entitled "Appointment of members and alternate members of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee", contained in document A/59/586.

In paragraph 4 of the report, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members or alternate members of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee for a four-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2005: Mr. Kenshiro Akimoto (Japan), Mr. Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry (Pakistan), Ms. Valeria María González Posse (Argentina), Mr. Andrei Vitalievitch Kovalenko (Russian Federation), Mr. Gerhard Küntzle (Germany), Mr. Lovemore Mazemo (Zimbabwe), Mr. Philip Richard Okanda Owade (Kenya) and Mr. Thomas Repasch (United States of America).

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint those persons I just mentioned as members or alternate members of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in French*): We turn now to the report of the Fifth Committee on sub-item (f) of agenda item 17, entitled "Appointment of members of the International Civil Service Commission", contained in document A/59/587.

In paragraph 6 of the report, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the International Civil Service Commission for a four-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2005: Mr. Fatih Bouayad-Agha (Algeria), Mr. Shamsher Chowdhury (Bangladesh), Mr. Vladimir Titov (Russian Federation), Mr. Xiaochu Wang (China) and Mr. El Hassane Zahid (Morocco).

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint those persons I just mentioned as members of the International Civil Service Commission?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in French*): May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-items (a) to (f) of agenda item 17?

It was so decided.

Agenda items 27 and 39

The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(d) Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General (A/59/581)

Draft resolution (A/59/L.44)

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Chief, General Assembly Affairs Branch): I should like to inform members of the following corrections to draft resolution A/59/L.44.

In part B of the draft resolution, operative paragraph 4 bis should be renumbered as operative paragraph 5 and the subsequent operative paragraphs should be renumbered accordingly. These corrections will be reflected in the final version of the draft resolution.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call on the representative of Germany to introduce draft resolution A/59/L.44.

Mr. Pleuger (Germany): As in previous years, I again have the honour to introduce the annual General Assembly draft resolution on Afghanistan (A/59/L.44), under agenda items 27 and 39(d). Allow me to underscore from the outset that Germany fully aligns herself with the statement of the European Union, which will be presented later by the Netherlands as the Presidency of the European Union.

Three years ago, the Afghan people seized the opportunity to end two decades of civil war. They decided to lead their country towards democracy, the rule of law and the promotion of human rights, and concluded the Bonn Agreement. Since then, many advances have been made along this path. Most recently, the international community witnessed the first direct election of the head of State in Afghan history and applauded the Afghan people for their commitment to casting their ballots. Yesterday, President Karzai was inaugurated.

Since last year's resolution, tremendous progress has been made in implementing the Bonn Agreement. In January 2004, a pluralistic and democratic constitution was adopted. Substantive improvements in the empowerment of women in Afghan politics have been achieved. Through the National Development Framework, the Afghan Government now assumes greater responsibilities in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the country.

At the same time, there is still a long way to go. The positive momentum created by the successful presidential election in October must be perpetuated. The following four major challenges lie ahead: first and foremost, the timely organization and implementation of parliamentary, provincial and district elections, now scheduled for April 2005 by the Joint Electoral Management Body; secondly, the continuation and substantial completion of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process before these elections; thirdly, the fight against the increase in the cultivation, production and trafficking of narcotic drugs; and fourthly, the lack of security caused by factional violence, drug trafficking, banditry and terrorism.

These challenges are all interconnected, with the issue of security at their core. A secure environment is essential not only for the holding of free and fair elections, but also for the success of the democratic process as such, as well as for reconstruction and economic development in Afghanistan. Factional violence, criminal activities and terrorism are sponsored by drug-related revenues. Unless this source is closed and the DDR process is completed, security will remain seriously threatened. It is therefore of utmost importance that the DDR process be completed in a comprehensive manner throughout the country, and that a counter-narcotics strategy be pursued

decisively by the Afghan Government, with the substantive assistance of the international community.

This year's draft resolution focuses on three major challenges: elections, DDR and the fight against narcotics. Our aim was to streamline the text and to point out the recent achievements as well as the major obstacles on Afghanistan's path towards a stable democracy. Let me highlight the key aspects of the text.

Concerning the upcoming parliamentary and local elections, a joint and accelerated effort by Afghan authorities, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the international community is needed in order to make these elections as successful as the presidential election in October. The preparation for parliamentary and local elections will be far more complex than it was for the presidential poll. While UNAMA and the Joint Electoral Management Body will have to ensure that the technical requirements are met to facilitate timely and inclusive elections, the international community will have to consider further financial commitments and the provision of international election monitoring.

It is important to note that the issues of irregular militias and ammunition stockpiles have to be addressed in the context of the DDR process. Only a comprehensive and nationwide DDR process will enable the central Government authority to provide a security situation conducive to the holding of free and fair elections.

Also, in light of a 64 per cent surge in opium cultivation and a 17 per cent rise in opium production within the last year, the fight against narcotics and organized crime has to be prominently addressed in this draft resolution. Efforts not only by the Afghan Government but also by its neighbouring countries, by the countries along trafficking routes and by the international community as a whole must be stepped up in order to tackle this problem. A comprehensive approach is needed: the effort to eliminate illicit poppy cultivation has to include not only increased law enforcement, interdiction and the eradication of illicit crops, but also support for demand reduction, crop substitution and other alternative livelihood and development programmes as well as public awareness and capacity-building for drug control institutions. The efforts of the Afghan authorities to implement their national drug control strategy and to pursue the

concrete steps set out in the work plan of the Afghan Government, which was presented at the International Conference on Afghanistan in Berlin in April 2004, must be continued and accelerated.

This year's draft resolution also reflects the progress that has been achieved on the humanitarian side, especially in the field of human rights, including women's rights. In addition to the Afghan Government, the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission plays a key role in this regard and should expand its range of operations to all parts of Afghanistan.

Nevertheless, many areas remain of great concern. Continuing reports of trafficking in children make us believe that Afghanistan and the international community must devote more attention and greater efforts to stopping this absolutely unacceptable abuse of children. Millions of returnees struggle to find their place in society and often become internally displaced persons. Drought is a threat to food security in certain provinces for the seventh consecutive year. Sufficient health and education services in all parts of the country are still at the formation stage. As a consequence, the maternal mortality rate in Afghanistan is among the highest in the world.

Afghanistan is a country in transition. Not only is humanitarian assistance needed, the Bonn process also foresees an integrated package of relief, recovery and reconstruction measures. From the start, the aim was to transform direct assistance into support for the Government's own development plans. We appreciate the coherent strategy for Afghan development. While weaknesses in the capacities of governmental and administrative institutions remain, the International Conference on Afghanistan, the Afghan Development Forum and this year's development budget represent significant steps forward in improving reconstruction under the Government's own leadership.

For many years now, Germany has felt a special commitment to Afghanistan, bilaterally as well as within the United Nations. This builds on a long-standing tradition of exchange between the Afghan and German peoples in the cultural and academic sectors. From the beginning, the German commitment has embraced many projects in the fields of education and human rights. Germany also took the lead role in establishing the Afghan police force. Germany's civil and military engagement now extends well beyond Kabul, to Kunduz, Herat and Feyzabad, Badakhshan

province. In April 2004, Germany hosted the International Conference on Afghanistan in Berlin.

Germany believes that the international community must remain committed to Afghanistan. I therefore appeal to all Member States to implement the pledges they made at Berlin and Tokyo and to contribute, *inter alia*, to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund and the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan, which are still not adequately funded today.

Whereas bilateral assistance is necessary and most welcome, the United Nations is and will remain the key body for aiding and supporting our Afghan friends in rebuilding their society, their economy and their country. The United Nations has admirably taken on this task. I would like to express my deep and sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General and his former and current Special Representatives, Lakhdar Brahimi and Jean Arnault, as well as to their staffs. Members of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the International Security Assistance Force, the Operation Enduring Freedom coalition, as well as national and international humanitarian personnel from governmental and non-governmental organizations do a tremendous job under difficult and often very dangerous circumstances. It is essential that they be able to continue their work.

The large number of sponsors of draft resolution A/59/L.44 — more than 130 at present — demonstrates the continued importance Member States attach to developments in Afghanistan. I should like to announce that since the publication of the draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors: Armenia, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea, Haiti, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, the Marshall Islands, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, the Russian Federation, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, the United Republic of Tanzania and the United States of America. I am therefore optimistic that we will manage to help Afghanistan on its path towards becoming a democratic and free country, respectful of its multicultural, multi-ethnic and historical heritage.

I would like to express my gratitude to all Member States willing to sponsor this draft resolution, and I would deeply appreciate it if, as in the past with similar texts, we could adopt it by consensus.

Mr. Farhâdi (Afghanistan): Let me begin by mentioning the major event that took place yesterday,

7 December 2004: a historic day for the people of Afghanistan. The first democratically elected President of Afghanistan, Mr. Hâmid Karzai, was sworn in as President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. That outstanding and memorable occasion was welcomed and cherished by millions of Afghans all over Afghanistan. The presence at the ceremony of a large number of foreign dignitaries testifies to the international community's crucial interest in the consolidation of democracy, peace and stability in Afghanistan and in the region. We are confident that under the leadership of President Karzai, and with the strong and increased support of the international community, Afghanistan can look forward to witnessing reconstruction and development in all aspects of life.

Today, the General Assembly, one year after the adoption of resolution 58/27 of 5 December 2003, is examining and assessing political, economic and humanitarian developments in Afghanistan. With great satisfaction, we report to Member States that in the course of this year we have been able successfully to implement two major components of the historic Bonn Agreement: the adoption on 4 January 2004 of the new Constitution by the Constitutional Loya Jirga, acting as a constitutional grand assembly; and the presidential election on 9 October 2004. The final element of the Agreement, the parliamentary and local elections, will be fulfilled, as agreed, in the spring of 2005.

The people of Afghanistan, including women, have participated with great fervour and enthusiasm in the two political processes I have just mentioned. Women constituted 20 per cent of the 502 delegates of the constituent assembly and 40 per cent of the 8.5 million voters in the presidential election. The massive participation of Afghans in the election, despite the campaign of intimidation by Al Qaeda and the Taliban, showed that the great majority of the Afghans resolutely wish to live in peace and security after decades of armed conflict.

In the course of the current year, significant changes and transformations have occurred in various aspects of life in the country. There has been substantive progress in the empowerment of women. The principle of equality of men and women is incorporated in the new Constitution. In the lower house of the National Assembly, two seats for each of the 34 provinces of Afghanistan have been allocated to women. Afghanistan has become a party to the

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is assisting Afghanistan in the drafting of national legislation for the implementation of the 12 universal instruments against terrorism.

The formation of the Afghan National Army is continuing successfully with the assistance of the United States and France. Likewise, the formation of the Afghan national police force is continuing with the help of Germany as lead nation. The Afghan national army and police were involved impressively in providing security for the presidential election. Italy is helping Afghanistan in the restoration of its judicial system and Japan is assisting the country to implement its disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

Despite the above-mentioned achievements, Afghanistan still faces a great number of challenges as a war-stricken country. The eradication of opium cultivation remains one of its major challenges. The links between criminal organizations, terrorists and drug trafficking create a situation that requires strong regional and international cooperation. In May 2003 Afghanistan adopted a national drug control strategy that encompasses increased law enforcement, crop substitution conducive to securing an alternative means of livelihood, and a development programme for rural areas. The United Kingdom is providing major assistance in this field. In accordance with the principle of shared responsibility, the international community is to assist Afghanistan in implementing its plan of action. The fight against the demand for heroin in the West calls for more effective action.

The reconstruction and development of Afghanistan demands a long-term commitment. We are confident that the international community will not disregard its commitment to assist Afghanistan. Our country's reconstruction and development is crucial for securing peace and cooperation in our region and in the world.

For the past six years, more than half of Afghanistan's provinces have sustained severe drought. As a result, crop yields were reduced during the 2004 harvest, and the cost of grain rose as a result. This natural disaster added further suffering to our already war-stricken people. We urgently appeal to the international community to provide the Afghan

Government with the humanitarian and financial assistance it requires.

Finally, we are sincerely thankful to the German Mission and to Ambassador Pleuger for his work in elaborating the draft resolution on Afghanistan currently before the Assembly (A/59/L.44) and leading the consultations with other interested delegations. We also appreciate the fruitful efforts in this matter of Mr. Ulrich Seidenberger and Mr. Axel Kuechle of the German Mission.

We are very thankful that we have a long list of co-sponsors of this draft resolution, and we invite the Assembly to consider it positively.

Mr. Hamburger (Netherlands): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia, and the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro align themselves with this statement.

With the successful holding of the first-ever direct presidential elections, Afghanistan has taken another important step on the way to democracy. The success of the elections is a result of many factors and of the hard work of a variety of people and organizations. On behalf of the European Union, allow me to express our admiration of the Afghan people for their eagerness and resolve to cast their ballots. I would also like to reiterate our congratulations to those who were involved in organizing and securing these elections in very challenging circumstances, namely the Joint Electoral Management Body, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and international and national security forces.

The European Union now looks forward to the parliamentary and local elections scheduled for next spring and stands ready to assist the Afghan Government and the United Nations to make these elections an equal success.

Notwithstanding this progress, many challenges remain. The security situation has deteriorated in many areas over the past year. Broad security threats caused by drug trafficking, factional fighting, banditry and terrorism not only significantly hamper the reconstruction process, they also continue to negatively impact the Bonn process. In his recent report, the

Secretary-General has emphasized that in order to ensure the successful holding of parliamentary elections, progress needs to be made especially in the areas of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), counter-narcotics activities and security sector reform. The European Union therefore welcomes recent Security Council resolution 1563 (2004) by which the mandate for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is extended.

The European Union is concerned that narcotics are becoming an increasing threat to national security, social development and governmental effectiveness in Afghanistan. Afghanistan produces 87 per cent of the world's opium, a great part of which enters the European Union. Opium cultivation has increased by 64 per cent and production by 17 per cent from 2003 to 2004. The money earned in the drug trade finances a growing and destabilizing criminal economy in Afghanistan. We urge the international community and the Afghan Government to work together to tackle that problem which affects almost every aspect of Afghanistan's development and security. The national drug control strategy and the Afghan implementation plan must be vigorously implemented.

While we welcome the progress already made in the area of DDR, the European Union is convinced that there remains a need to intensify the DDR process. In that regard, the European Union shares the assessment of the Secretary-General that the issue of irregular militias needs to be addressed.

In order to ensure stability and security in Afghanistan in the future, the European Union also reiterates the importance for further progress, under the impulse of the lead nations, on all the items of security sector reform. Significant steps have been taken during the last year concerning the reconstitution of the Afghan national army and police and the reform of the justice system, but much more needs to be done.

The European Union remains concerned about continuing reports of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. It takes note of the report of the United Nations independent expert on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan in which a number of priority issues for immediate action are identified. We welcome in that regard the commitment of the Afghan Government to implement the human rights provisions of the new Afghan Constitution and to implement and report on ratified human rights

treaties. In that context, the European Union attaches particular importance to the protection and promotion of women's rights and a better access by women to health and educational services.

Restoring overall security and establishing lasting peace in Afghanistan is impossible without the contribution of neighbouring countries. The European Union stresses the importance of regional cooperation and encourages the further development of good-neighbourly relations, building on the basis of the 2002 Kabul Declaration.

During past years, the European Union has supported the Afghan reconstruction process by providing substantial financial and technical aid. It has also provided humanitarian assistance where required, paying particular attention to those who need support the most, such as returnees and displaced persons. In that context, the European Union would like to stress the continuing importance of donor coordination in order to make the best use of resources.

Let me conclude by stressing that the European Union remains committed in the long term to the reconstruction, development and stabilization of Afghanistan. The Berlin work plan and its implementation by all parties must be the cornerstone of our engagement.

Mr. Kazykhanov (Kazakhstan): I have the honour to address the General Assembly today on behalf of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and its members, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The peace process in Afghanistan has been considerably strengthened since the Bonn Agreement was signed in 2001. The country is steadily eliminating the aftermath of the civil war by strengthening new executive authority, resolving the tasks of building its statehood, and rehabilitating its social and economic situation. The territory of that State is no longer a stronghold for international terrorism and presents no threat to its neighbours. Afghanistan has regained its position as an equal member of the international community.

At the same time, the settlement in Afghanistan is still confronted with serious problems. The way they are resolved will determine to a great extent whether or

not the reforms become irreversible. The national presidential elections held on 9 October, the first in the country's history, were a momentous political event. We view them as the most important step on the way to the establishment of new institutions of State power based on democratic principles. We sincerely hope on behalf of the Afghan people that the election of the President facilitates the further consolidation of Afghan society and the establishment of democratic principles in that country.

Ensuring the unity of Afghanistan based on respect for the interests of all ethnicities and the observance of basic legal standards and human freedoms is a most pressing task. Hopefully, the implementation of that task will be facilitated by the parliamentary elections to be held in April 2005, and the international community should provide all-round support for their organization.

Unfortunately, the overall situation in Afghanistan is still characterized by persistent problems in the security area, while the Taliban and other extremist elements still pose challenges to stability in Afghanistan. While extremist elements had no possibility of openly contesting the highest State position in the presidential election campaign, during the forthcoming parliamentary elections they will undoubtedly make strenuous efforts to squeeze themselves into governing structures. Those attempts should be resolutely blocked. We are confident that that can be done without prejudice to the overall process of reconciliation in Afghan society.

The presence of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is crucial if security is to be enrooted in Afghanistan. It is obvious that, in order to stabilize the situation throughout the territory of that country, ISAF should substantially enlarge its presence, above all in the southern and south-eastern regions. The participating States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are actively assisting the international and coalition forces, inter alia, by offering their infrastructure for organizing logistics supplies and military transit.

We attach great importance to consistent compliance with the Kabul Declaration on Good-neighbourly Relations by the signatory States. All other countries should facilitate its implementation. We welcome international efforts to assist in creating the Afghan national army and police forces. However, a

very cautious approach should be taken to the reform of the armed forces and of the entire Afghan security sector. We need to seek well-balanced representation of ethnic groups in security structures.

Much work has to be done before the Government of Afghanistan can succeed in remedying the situation surrounding illegal drug production and trafficking. There is therefore an urgent need to implement a set of social, economic and law enforcement measures within and outside the country. One of the key elements of that strategy is the need to strengthen existing and to create new anti-drugs "security belts". Participating States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are making an important contribution to resolving the drug problem by developing, among other things, specific political, legal and other operational measures within the organization. We are ready to coordinate our action with the Afghan Government and international and coalition forces in the country in that important field.

Considerable rehabilitation and reconstruction tasks are still to be carried out. It is important to ensure that the contributions announced at donor conferences are disbursed in a timely manner, reach the Afghan people and effectively ensure them a better quality of life. Participating States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, in turn, are providing diversified assistance to that country and are ready to further participate in international endeavours to rebuild its economy, taking into account the interests of the Afghan side and based on our many years' experience of cooperation with Afghanistan. Better regional economic cooperation is vital for the rehabilitation of Afghanistan. Therefore, we support the steps taken to that end.

The United Nations should continue to play a central coordinating role in the international efforts taken in Afghanistan. We support the active work done by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, Mr. Jean Arnault. Considering that, following parliamentary elections in Afghanistan in spring 2005, the schedule of the Bonn peace process will have been completed, it would seem expedient to determine and agree in advance upon the parameters of the international community's further participation in the new stage of the Afghan post-conflict process. At the same time, the agreements reached at the Berlin conference should be taken into account.

We believe that it is useful to carry on our work on Afghanistan within both the Security Council and the General Assembly. The decisions of the two organs are complementary rather than duplicating. We support the General Assembly's draft resolution on Afghanistan, prepared by a wide group of sponsors and introduced by Germany. We hope that its adoption by consensus will help to build on the concerted efforts of the international community in the interests of the rehabilitation of Afghanistan.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The first presidential election in the history of Afghanistan has been successfully concluded. Mr. Karzai won the election and was formally inaugurated on 7 December. China warmly welcomes that major achievement in Afghanistan's political and peace process, and sincerely congratulates President Karzai on his election.

Over the past three years, through the common efforts of the Interim Authority and the Transitional Government, as well as its entire people, Afghanistan has made notable progress in the realization of national reconciliation and the promotion of national reconstruction in demonstration of the strong desire of the Afghan people to be the true master of its own destiny and its firm resolve to work towards the long-term stability and peace of the country. This is a heartening development.

At the present time, Afghanistan is only a step away from completing the political process provided for in the Bonn Agreement, and yet, as the Chinese saying goes, "The first 90 miles are only halfway through a 100-mile journey". We hope that a specific timetable for parliamentary and local elections can be established as soon as possible so that the organizational work can proceed in an orderly manner so as to ensure successful elections.

Mr. Karzai still has many challenges ahead of him. Politically, he needs to unite different ethnic communities and factions and establish a highly efficient, clean, professional and broadly representative Government as soon as possible and to ensure the holding of parliamentary and local elections on schedule.

Economically, he needs to continue to heal the wounds of war, lay down a solid foundation for sustainable development, enhance self-sufficiency and continue to improve the living conditions of his people.

In the area of security, he needs to strengthen the authority of the central Government, eradicate the remnant forces of terrorism, rein in factional infighting and speed up the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

Furthermore, the war against narcotics in Afghanistan still has a long way to go. It is necessary to tackle the problem at its roots and carry out the 10-year anti-drug programme, with a view to meeting the target of eradicating illicit drugs in the country by the year 2012.

Although the road ahead may be bumpy, we hope and believe that under the leadership of President Karzai and with the efforts of all its people, as well as with the help of the international community, Afghanistan, this beautiful, ancient country of mountains, will soon emerge from the ravages of war, set out on the road towards stability and sound development and contribute to regional peace and prosperity.

Every step forward taken by Afghanistan crystallizes the solemn commitment and solid support of the international community. We appreciate the positive efforts made by the United Nations to promote peace and reconstruction in Afghanistan, and we believe that the Organization should continue to play a leading role in the question of Afghanistan. We also believe that the international community needs to continue to pay attention to peace and reconstruction in Afghanistan, provide all necessary help and make concerted efforts to advance peace and reconstruction in that country. China supports the adoption of the draft resolution (A/59/L.44), submitted by the Permanent Mission of Germany on this question.

As a neighbour of Afghanistan, China has closely followed the developments in that country. We have always respected the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Afghanistan and have consistently supported the political and peace processes there. We have actively participated in its post-war economic reconstruction, and we honoured our pledge to provide \$150 million in assistance. At this stage, China is devoting the bulk of its assistance to the restoration of the Republic Hospital and the Parwan irrigation project. Together with Afghanistan's other neighbours, China and the Afghan Government have signed the Kabul Declaration on Good-Neighbourly Relations, aimed at promoting good-

neighbourliness, friendship and cooperation; the Declaration on Encouraging Closer Trade, Transit and Investment Cooperation; and the Declaration on Counter-Narcotics, all within the Framework of the Kabul Declaration. We will take effective measures to implement these Declarations. China stands ready to make a greater contribution to peace and development in Afghanistan.

Mr. Alimov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): The entire world has witnessed how the courageous people of Afghanistan, within a very short period of time, carried out an historic breakthrough, moving towards the future with the support of the United Nations and the entire international community.

The date 9 October 2004 marked the first time in the history of the Afghan State that presidential elections were held; this event will go down in the history of the Afghan people as a day that signalled the starting point of a new life in the long-suffering land of Afghanistan.

Millions of Afghan voters, who that day came to the polls despite the danger of attacks, said loudly and firmly, "Yes", to the Bonn process and to the new authorities on whom they place hopes for further measures to consolidate Afghan society and to end its difficult social and economic situation. No less important is the fact that, through the expression of their free will, the men and women of Afghanistan uttered a firm "No" to civil war and international terrorism.

Tajikistan has noted with satisfaction the successes achieved in fraternal neighbouring Afghanistan. We are confident and hopeful that these gains will form the basis for the establishment of lasting peace and stability, the achievement of genuine national reconciliation and those long-awaited changes that the citizens of Afghanistan hope to see as a foundation for a dignified future life. A step towards achieving this end is in the parliamentary elections scheduled for April 2005. It is our hope that the international community, in carrying out the obligations it has undertaken, will render the necessary assistance in the holding of those elections.

We have all been witnesses to the difficult, often dangerous path to what has been achieved today in Afghanistan, and that path makes the success achieved all the more valuable. It is all the more important to strengthen that achievement and to build on it. In the

light of the realities in Afghanistan today, that will not be possible without international support.

The participation of the international community continues to be a highly important factor for the maintenance of peace and for assisting the Bonn process. Many unresolved problems remain in the country, particularly in ensuring security and the rule of law. The opponents of the policy of President Hamid Karzai are continuing to concoct plans for undermining the Afghan peace process and for returning the country to the era of political chaos and lawlessness. Such a course of events would be a great disappointment, not only for millions of Afghan citizens who have finally breathed the air of freedom and who are living in hope of a speedy economic recovery and a political structure for the country, but also for the entire international community.

In that context, what is of great importance is the expansion of regions in which the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is present. Until the conclusion of the process of the formation of new Afghan security forces, ISAF will be playing an important, if not key, role. To a great extent, in our view, it is the presence of ISAF that will determine the success or the failure of the peace process in Afghanistan.

The growing production of narcotic drugs is also a major obstacle, not only to the success of the Bonn process, but also for the future of the Afghan State itself. In these circumstances, to counteract the danger of drugs — which was addressed by President Emomali Rakhmonov — we must now take further steps in terms of effective cooperation. It is clear that, to dismantle Afghanistan's "opium economy", fresh efforts will be needed — both in those countries through which Afghan opium products are transported and in those where heroin use is becoming a serious problem. Tajikistan, as a transit State, will be expanding its active participation in bilateral and multilateral cooperative efforts in this area of vital importance to us all.

Afghan society today is facing new challenges, and problems lie ahead that are no less complex than the ones of State-building and socio-economic recovery. It is clear that the process of building a new country and a new democratic State is a highly complex one.

The Tajik people have, in the recent past, successfully dealt with those problems. Tajikistan

believes that, with a popularly elected President who now enjoys a broad mandate, the courageous Afghan people will be able to successfully cope with these difficult problems. Strong international support is imperative in order for progress to be achieved in all areas of the new Afghan society.

The United Nations must continue to play its pivotal role in coordinating international efforts in Afghanistan through the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. We deeply appreciate the Mission's selfless work and that of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan.

Mr. Radzi (Malaysia): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Secretary-General; his Special Representative, Mr. Jean Arnaud; the relevant United Nations agencies; and all the men and women of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their remarkable efforts and for the valuable work that has been carried out in respect of Afghanistan, despite the prevailing difficult and dangerous conditions.

We are pleased to note that, since the signing of the Bonn Agreement three years ago, Afghanistan has registered impressive progress towards peacebuilding, recovery and reconstruction. Those achievements have been made possible, inter alia, by the improved security situation in the country. We believe that, with a functioning Government now in place, many essential measures to further enhance stability and establish confidence in the country can be effectively pursued and implemented. Those measures are not only vital for Afghanistan's peace and stability but will have a positive impact on peace and stability in the region.

However, like any other country emerging from decades of internal conflict, Afghanistan requires continuing support from the international community. The encouraging achievements made in the area of security and other essential areas must continue to be sustained and strengthened, including in particular the economic and social development of the country. Malaysia, in that respect, looks forward to cooperating closely with the Government of Afghanistan in the context of our bilateral relations and is ready to explore ways and means to continue to enhance our relations.

My delegation joins others in congratulating President Hâmid Karzai on his inauguration as the first democratically elected president of Afghanistan on 7 December 2004. We wish President Karzai and the

people of Afghanistan success as they undertake the tasks of stabilization and reconstruction, including preparations for the upcoming parliamentary elections. The inauguration was a reflection of the success of the presidential election and, more importantly, of the will of the people to achieve peace and development.

The presidential election and the recently adopted Constitution are two crucial milestones envisaged by the Bonn Agreement that are necessary in the process of building a strong, democratic State in Afghanistan. My delegation believes that the election would not have been possible without the concerted efforts and excellent preparations undertaken by the Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB) and UNAMA. My delegation appreciates the multifaceted difficulties faced by the JEMB. We congratulate it for its efforts, its dedication to address existing problems and its commitment to maintaining the transparency of the electoral process, leading to its success. We are encouraged by the impressive participation, enthusiasm and support of the Afghan people in the context of the electoral process and the peaceful and orderly environment in which the election took place.

It must be acknowledged that, although a measure of progress has been achieved in Afghanistan, there remain many challenges ahead that could present serious obstacles to the full recovery of that country. In that regard, my delegation urges the Government of Afghanistan, with the help of the international community, to continue to confront the remaining challenges in the following areas: security; timely preparations for the parliamentary elections in April 2005; the reconstruction of institutions; the fight against narcotics; and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of Afghan militias.

Malaysia calls on the international community to provide continued support to the Government and the people of Afghanistan as they rebuild their country, strengthen the foundations of constitutional democracy and assume their rightful place in the community of nations. We are encouraged by the Secretary-General's assurances of continuing commitment to assist the new Government in Kabul as it continues to address the vital tasks required to fulfil the letter and spirit of the Bonn Agreement. We fully support the Secretary-General. Malaysia stands ready to cooperate with him and will continue to provide, within our modest capacity, technical assistance and training to Afghans under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme.

Malaysia notes with concern the report's observation that the cultivation and trafficking of narcotics remains a major challenge not only for Afghanistan but also for its neighbour countries and to the world at large. In that regard, we believe that the international community has an important role to play in forming a strong partnership with and assisting the Government of Afghanistan in its interdiction efforts to substantively decrease the drug trade in the near future, with a view to its total eradication in the long term; in strengthening its institutional capacity in the implementation of the rule of law; and in supporting the local economy through the provision of income-generating opportunities and the establishment of larger-scale infrastructure and industrial projects to provide non-farm income opportunities.

With regard to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process in Afghanistan, my delegation commends the important role played by the United Nations Development Programme and Japan. We note that the process of presidential elections itself had a positive effect on disarmament efforts. However, we are of the view that it would be pertinent to fully address security concerns prior to the parliamentary elections, to be held in April 2005. We call upon the Afghan Government to intensify its efforts to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate the warlords and their followers. Failure in this important area would risk the danger of unravelling the fragile peace achieved so far. In Malaysia's capacity as Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), my delegation wishes to reiterate the unflinching commitment of Malaysia and the other NAM members to Afghanistan, as reflected in the final document of the thirteenth NAM Summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in February 2003 and the fourteenth Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement in Durban, South Africa in August 2004. In this connection, NAM has expressed its resolve to contribute to efforts to promote reconstruction and rehabilitation in Afghanistan during its nation-building process.

Afghanistan is on the road to recovery from the devastation of more than two decades of war. Despite the difficulties, the country has been able to accomplish relatively impressive progress in the past three years. We have to recognize, nonetheless, that the ongoing efforts will continue to be difficult and challenging. However, we are confident that a stable, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan will be

established, and with the sustained and collaborative effort of the United Nations, the international community, the people of Afghanistan and their neighbours.

On this note, my delegation is pleased to join other delegations in co-sponsoring the draft resolution on this important question that has been introduced by the Permanent Representative of Germany, to whom we express our deep appreciation.

Mr. Kitaoka (Japan): Let me begin by congratulating President Karzai on his election and the successful inauguration of his Government yesterday. The registration of more than 10 million voters for the presidential election held last October was an impressive achievement, and fully 80 per cent of those registered actually voted. These results provide a clear demonstration of the strong determination of each and every Afghan citizen to build a truly democratic State. Japan has made a contribution to the successful presidential elections by extending financial assistance in the amount of \$17 million and by sending Japanese election monitoring teams to Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran.

That said, the challenges remaining are still enormous in the lead-up to the parliamentary elections to be held next spring, the final goal of the Bonn process. I would like to discuss four points in this connection.

First, the preparations for the parliamentary elections are still at a preliminary stage. The process must be accelerated. In order to maintain and enhance the momentum created by the successful presidential election, it is important that the parliamentary elections be held on schedule in April and May of next year, and, for that goal, more assistance from the international community will be required.

Secondly, with regard to the issue of security, I must note that it is remarkable that there were no major disturbances during the presidential election. We highly appreciate the contribution of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and especially the role played by Afghanistan's own security forces. We are also proud to say that Japan Self-Defense Forces vessels are still engaged in activities in the Indian Ocean in support of Operation Enduring Freedom's maritime interdiction operation of the coalition countries fighting against terrorism in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, the repeated attacks occurring throughout

the country remind us that security is still extremely precarious and needs to be substantially improved. We believe that the progress made to date in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), for which Japan has taken the lead in providing assistance, together with the United Nations, has also contributed significantly to the creation of an environment conducive to the organization of a fair election. However, successful DDR alone will not be sufficient to improve the security situation. Overall progress in security sector reform, including continued work on formation of the national army and police force, is necessary. We will therefore make further efforts in coordination with our Afghan and international partners.

Thirdly, we are seriously concerned about the drug production and trafficking problem. While the international and national effort continues, a tremendous harvest in opium and trafficking in that drug overshadow the peace process. Illicit drug trafficking generates the illegal earnings that hinder the efforts to reconstruct the country. Effective counter-narcotics measures are of critical importance in order to promote effective unification and nation-building in Afghanistan.

For my fourth and final point, let me say that, while we welcome the achievements in various sectors in Afghanistan, if we wish to consolidate peace and make it sustainable, it is imperative that further, community-based development assistance be made available, particularly in the provinces. An example of such efforts is the Ogata Initiative, a comprehensive regional development plan that is currently under way. Moreover, we recognize that the rehabilitation of infrastructure is essential to support Afghanistan's efforts to reconstruct the country. This October, we completed the Kabul-Kandahar road rehabilitation project and we have just launched the Kandahar-Heart road rehabilitation project. Our assistance to Afghanistan has amounted to more than \$800 million in total since September 2001. We remain strongly committed to continuing our support to Afghanistan.

The experience in Afghanistan is a test case for the United Nations and the international community to determine how to go about providing support and encouraging the initiative of the people to rebuild a failed State. The Bonn process is approaching its final stage, but cooperation between Afghanistan and the international community must not end with the completion of the Bonn process. We appeal to all

Member States to renew and enhance their solidarity and cooperation with the Afghan people, who need our support now more than ever.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his latest report on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, and on emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan.

Important progress has obviously been made in the three years since the signing of the Bonn Agreement. As regards recent developments in the political sector, the adoption of the new Constitution by Afghanistan's Constitutional Grand Assembly — the Loya Jirga — on 4 January 2004 and the holding of the presidential elections on 9 October 2004 both mark milestones.

We take this opportunity, as have previous speakers, to repeat our sincere congratulations to President Hamid Karzai on his victory in this first direct presidential election in Afghanistan. We congratulate the Afghan people for the commitment they have shown to bring about and secure democracy in their country. We also commend all parties involved for their role in organizing and safeguarding the elections.

The strong participation of women in the election, representing 40 per cent of the voters, is remarkable, not least in the light of their systematic exclusion under the Taliban regime.

Contrary to what had been feared, international observer missions, such as the Election Support Team from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, concluded that the election process had been conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner. Although shortcomings were detected, they were considered to be organizational in nature rather than dishonest. Shortcomings can be overcome by applying lessons learned in preparations for future elections, most notably for the parliamentary and local elections scheduled for the spring of 2005.

The Secretary-General makes it clear in his report that immense challenges still lie ahead. Attacks in recent months, and the abduction of international electoral staff, exemplify the dire security situation still existing in Afghanistan. That, in turn, has a negative impact on reconstruction efforts. My Government once

again deplores all attacks, in every form, against civilians and United Nations and non-governmental organization staff.

The Afghanistan Opium Survey 2004, released in November by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, provides an alarming account of what the Secretary-General considers in his report to be an increased "threat to national security, social stability and governmental effectiveness". Opium cultivation in Afghanistan grew by 64 per cent from 2003 to 2004, setting a double record for the highest opium cultivation in the country's history and the largest in the world. Afghanistan produces nearly 90 per cent of the world's opium. We continue to stress the need to address all aspects of the illicit trade — namely, production capacity, trade routes and users. This is obviously a joint task for the international community.

Finally, Iceland, which together with Afghanistan and Sweden joined the United Nations on 19 November 1946 as the first non-founding United Nations Members, is pleased to be among the traditional sponsors of the draft resolution on Afghanistan, prepared by the delegation of Germany, and is indeed deeply committed to making its contribution towards establishing security in Afghanistan.

On 1 June 2004, the Icelandic contingent in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) took on a leading role in running Kabul International Airport, where it provides the Airport Commander and other key personnel, including flight operations staff, firefighters and additional technical specialists. Considerable progress has been made during the past five months; the airport's infrastructure has been improved and reforms have been implemented in its operating functions. The facility constitutes one of the key elements in ISAF's successful operation and in the reconstruction efforts taking place in the country. On 1 February 2005, the management of the airport will be handed over to Turkey, and Iceland wishes Turkey every success in carrying out its new responsibilities. Icelanders will continue to work at the airport until mid-2005.

As regards further participation from Iceland in the ongoing rebuilding efforts in Afghanistan, my Government is now considering providing personnel to the provincial reconstruction teams in the northern part of the country.

Mr. Danesh-Yazdi (Islamic Republic of Iran): May I begin by expressing our gratitude to the

Secretary-General for his informative and lucid report to the General Assembly on various aspects of the situation in Afghanistan over the past 12 months. His dedication and efforts directed towards the improvement of the situation in Afghanistan, and those of his current and previous Special Representatives, Mr. Arnault and Ambassador Brahimi, respectively, deserve our profound admiration and support. We are confident that such inspired commitment will help the Afghan Government and people as they strive for durable peace, normalcy and security in their country.

The year 2004 has marked a new era in the history of Afghanistan. In the course of the year, the country has witnessed two major and unprecedented developments — the approval by the Constitutional Loya Jirga of a new constitution in January, and the holding of a successful presidential election in October. Those two historic events have not only shaped the political landscape of the country, they have also diminished the temptation and scepticism that had surfaced to undermine the will of the Afghan nation to establish a free and democratic society.

We are, therefore, pleased to witness the first outcome of this political process, which marks the election of President Karzai as the first democratically elected head of State in Afghanistan. We warmly congratulate President Karzai on his election and wish him every success in leading the country through this important period. Moreover, we earnestly hope that this positive and decisive development will be further pursued through the holding of timely, fair and free parliamentary and local elections and by the establishment of a broad-based, representative and multi-ethnic Government. To accomplish such a huge mission will undeniably be difficult and burdensome. Thus the international community should make every effort to help the Afghan Government remove existing hurdles so as to achieve that objective.

The recent report of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan (A/59/581) refers to progress made and reforms planned in the economic and social fields, particularly in public administration, fiscal management and the national education system. The Afghan Government has also taken major steps to implement projects involving disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, as well as the development of the new Afghan national army and an Afghan national police force and the creation of a fair and effective justice system. These projects would

address the important challenges that the country has been facing for a long time.

Despite such commendable efforts, much remains to be done and major challenges still lie ahead. The terrorist and extremist threats — mostly from the remnants of the Taliban and Al Qaeda — drug trafficking, criminal activities and factional violence are just the main challenges to the stability of the country. Undoubtedly, strengthening the Afghan national army and police and expansion of the authority of the central Government across the country are essential steps which need to be continued to provide security throughout Afghanistan.

Continued increase in the cultivation, production and trafficking of narcotic drugs in Afghanistan is an alarming challenge that, despite the sincere efforts made by the Afghan Government, has endangered the security of the country and its political, economic and social development, along with regional stability. Undoubtedly, insecurity and drug trafficking in Afghanistan are mutually reinforcing and each contributes to terrorism and other forms of transnational crime.

Across the globe, the lines between international organized crime and global terrorism have become blurred and the links between them have grown in the past decade, thus making it imperative and indispensable that the international community begin revamping its strategy for the war on those menaces.

As the remnants of the Taliban and Al Qaeda are among the major beneficiaries of drug money, there is an absolute need for the international community to assist the Afghan Government to implement its comprehensive national drug control strategy, inter alia, through building institutions, eliminating illicit poppy cultivation, reducing the demand for illicit drugs, crop substitution, strengthening law enforcement and promoting alternative livelihoods.

Since the fight against drug trafficking is more effective and less costly along Afghan borders, the international community should support the efforts by the States neighbouring Afghanistan and those along the trafficking routes to curb the flow of illicit drugs. As is well known, the Islamic Republic of Iran, for its part, has fought a costly war against heavily armed drug traffickers during the past two decades and stands ready to continue that undesirable fight as long as this calamity persists in affecting our society and security.

The cost of that fight is not exclusively economic in nature; we have lost more than 3,300 law enforcement personnel in the war against drug traffickers over the past 25 years. Only last year 48 officers were killed in more than 2,300 gun battles with drug traffickers.

As a result of that resolute policy, Iran stands at the forefront of the worldwide drug battle. However, we cannot conceal the bitter reality that, despite our costly and extensive campaign against this menace, drug trafficking has been on the rise over the past year due to the increase in the cultivation and production of drugs in Afghanistan. For Iran to sustain its ongoing fierce fight against drug trafficking, international support, and especially the cooperation of neighbouring countries, is indispensable.

The cultivation and production of drugs have become major sources of income for many farmers and producers, thus diminishing incentives to search for alternative, licit sources. That is particularly true in the case of Afghanistan, where insecurity and the collapse of the economic infrastructure have contributed to widespread unemployment, poverty and lack of economic activities in the country. Thus, the Afghan reconstruction process is a priority that should be effectively implemented in all fields.

The international community, led by the United Nations, should also redouble its efforts in the provision of international assistance for the development and reconstruction of Afghanistan. Iran, for its part, has had an active role and presence in the process of the reconstruction of Afghanistan and has tried to fulfil the promise it made at the Tokyo Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan. In that regard, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been engaged in various infrastructure activities in Afghanistan, including electricity projects, road construction, manpower training and humanitarian services.

In general, Iran's contribution to the reconstruction of Afghanistan has amounted so far to almost \$150 million over the last three years. At the same time, we are currently engaged in more than 40 projects in both Iran and Afghanistan to help promote the foreign trade of that land-locked country. It may be worth mentioning that the Milak Bridge, planned and constructed by Iran on the border between the two countries, was inaugurated on 20 November this year. The bridge, also known as the Silk Bridge, plays a key role in developing and facilitating trade with Afghanistan.

A number of smaller projects, in particular those that supply electric power, have also been inaugurated to help 4,000 Afghan families who live in the vicinity of the Iran-Afghan border. Iran also extended its full cooperation to the relevant United Nations bodies and other international organizations, as well as to the Government of Afghanistan, for the out-of-country participation of Afghan refugees who were living in Iran during the presidential election of 9 October. Afghan refugees in Iran were able to cast their votes in approximately 1,000 polling stations at 250 locations in seven major cities of our country.

As to the voluntary return of refugees from the Islamic Republic of Iran to Afghanistan, we are fully committed to the implementation of the trilateral agreement we signed with the Afghan Government and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. At the same time, a more thorough approach by the Afghan Government and the international community to help create a stable basis for the return of refugees is imperative.

I cannot conclude my statement without affirming our resolve to continue to help the Afghan Government and people to overcome the enormous challenges they still face. The international community should also foster closer and broader cooperation under the auspices of this world Organization towards the consolidation of peace, security and stability in Afghanistan.

In view of our principled position, we join the sponsors of draft resolution A/59/L.44 and extend our appreciation to the German delegation for its excellent work in the preparation and finalization of the draft resolution.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): This week marks the third anniversary of the historic Bonn Agreement, which was the turning point in Afghanistan's transition from war to peace. Pakistan has worked very closely with the international community in the implementation of the Bonn process. During the last year, two important benchmarks in this process have been achieved — the successful conclusion of the constitutional process, and the holding of the presidential elections in Afghanistan. President Hamid Karzai's inauguration this week as the elected President of Afghanistan was the manifestation of those successful steps in the Bonn process. President Musharraf visited Kabul last month to personally congratulate President Karzai.

While the Bonn process is on track, security remains the most serious challenge to peace and prosperity in Afghanistan. We thank the Secretary-General for his informative report. It identifies the following main threats to Afghanistan's security: extremist or terrorist attacks, factional violence among militia forces and violence and other threats to human security by criminal elements, in particular those involved in the trafficking of drugs.

In our view, the most serious threat emanates from the warlords and factional militias, and the nexus between them and drug traffickers. Robust measures and resolute action are therefore required to address those threats. Such measures include comprehensive disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of all factional militias and the demilitarization of Kabul. The Bonn process will remain incomplete until that is achieved. To facilitate DDR, it is necessary to ensure a robust presence of the International Security Assistance Force and to accelerate the creation of a professional and ethnically integrated Afghan national army and police, security and intelligence services and institutions. State authority needs to be extended across the country. A national reconciliation policy, aimed at incorporating all Afghans willing to join the rebuilding of the country, will also help in the national integration process.

Pakistan recognizes the serious threat to Afghanistan's security from the resurgence of extremist forces, including Taliban remnants and Al Qaeda. We have been working closely with United States and Afghan authorities to strengthen security along the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan through the Trilateral Commission. Pakistan has deployed over 75,000 troops along this difficult 2,500-kilometre-long border. Extensive antiterrorist operations have been undertaken. We have captured over 600 Al Qaeda and Taliban terrorist elements. Unfortunately, Pakistan has lost over 200 soldiers and policemen in those operations. For the complete success of the operations, it is essential that Pakistan's substantial security presence be matched by a commensurate security presence on the Afghan side of the international border.

We welcome the discerning new approach adopted by President Karzai's Government to separate ordinary Afghans from the terrorists, who continue to challenge the authority of the central Government. National reconciliation in Afghanistan now demands a new approach, one which casts off the shackles of war

and looks forward to the dawn of peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Over the last two decades Pakistan has hosted millions of Afghan refugees without much appreciable assistance from the international community. We are pleased with the voluntary repatriation of many of them over the past few years. However, we remain concerned that the repatriation process has slowed due to insecurity in Afghanistan, as well as the absence of economic opportunity for the returnees. To ensure sustainable returns, we hope that recovery and reconstruction assistance will be especially targeted on the rural areas where most of the refugees come from.

The first person to cast a vote in the Afghan presidential elections was a 19-year-old Afghan woman in Pakistan. We expect that the Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran — who constitute 20 to 30 per cent of the Afghan population — will be able to exercise their democratic right to vote in the forthcoming parliamentary elections as they did in the Afghan presidential elections. Such a large proportion of the Afghan population obviously cannot be disenfranchised. We strongly urge the Afghan and international authorities to make the necessary preparations for out-of-country voting by the Afghan refugees in the parliamentary elections. Pakistan stands ready to assist them in this process.

Afghanistan's peace and stability depend on security and a stable political process, but that can be sustained only through reconstruction and development. In this context, the level of reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in Afghanistan remains inadequate and disappointing.

The economic vacuum is being filled by the illicit production of and trafficking in narcotics. The international community must simultaneously combat illicit drugs and energize reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. In addition, comprehensive counter-narcotic strategies must seek to provide income-generation and an alternative livelihood to Afghan farmers, to wean them away from poppy production. Efforts will also be required to reduce the demand for Afghan drugs in destination countries, as well as to combat illicit trafficking of precursors, which play an essential part in the production of narcotic drugs.

At the Tokyo Conference, Pakistan pledged more than \$100 million over a five-year period towards Afghanistan's reconstruction. Our assistance is being

provided in areas identified by the Afghan Government and channelled through it. In addition, we have extended additional transit trade facilities to Afghanistan. Bilateral trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan is now over \$1 billion. We are also exploring with the Afghan Government the possibilities of private sector cooperation and investment opportunities, particularly in such areas as cement, pharmaceuticals and consumer goods. Pakistan strongly supports implementation of the gas pipeline project between Pakistan, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. We also welcome all other initiatives aimed at economically integrating Afghanistan with its neighbours and with regional economic structures.

Finally, I wish to reaffirm Pakistan's full and unequivocal support for the Bonn process and for President Hamid Karzai's Government. Pakistan supports Mr. Karzai's efforts aimed at national reconciliation and reconstruction of his country. There can be no doubt that a strong, stable and prosperous Afghanistan is in Pakistan's vital national interest. We will therefore spare no effort to help achieve this. Pakistan is resolved to work actively with the international community to promote peace, stability, reconstruction and economic development in Afghanistan.

Mr. Løvold (Norway): Yesterday, Mr. Hamid Karzai was inaugurated as the first-ever elected President of Afghanistan — a milestone in the country's history. President Karzai has been given a strong mandate to confront the difficult challenges facing the country. Long-term commitment by the international community is of vital importance. Norway welcomes the partnership between Afghanistan and the international community that was reconfirmed at the Berlin Conference earlier this year.

Without security there will be no development, and without development there will be no security. The fragile security situation underscores the need for a national army and police force and a functioning justice system. We urge the Afghan Government to accelerate the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. While Afghan ownership is essential, the international community must provide substantial support for security sector reforms. Norway will continue to assist in the training of Afghan police under the German-led police project.

Until Afghan security institutions are sufficiently strengthened, international security forces are needed.

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has a crucial role to play in securing stability in the country. Extending security to the provinces is essential. In that regard the provincial reconstruction teams have an important role to play by providing security and extending the authority of the central Government.

Afghanistan is NATO's main priority, and Norway's priorities are well in line with NATO's policy. We remain committed to maintaining a military presence in Afghanistan through our contribution to the ISAF in Kabul and our participation in one of the provincial reconstruction teams in northern Afghanistan.

The expanding drug economy is a major challenge, and combating it must be a top priority for us all. It is corrupting Government officials and undermining lawful economic activities. If the drug profiteers are allowed to continue their thriving business, the consequences will be devastating and will reach far beyond the borders of Afghanistan. They will also be felt in our own societies through increased drug abuse.

Norway supports the Afghan National Drug Control Strategy and urges the Afghan Government to commit itself fully to its implementation. Coordinated international efforts under the leadership of the United Kingdom are also appreciated. Norway is increasing its support for counter-narcotic activities.

In the last year we have witnessed an increasing number of attacks on United Nations and civilian aid workers, most of them Afghans. That is unacceptable. A concerted effort is needed to reverse a trend that runs counter to the most basic tenets of international humanitarian law.

The United Nations and non-governmental organizations have raised concerns about the mixing of military and civilian roles. That complex issue underscores the need to strengthen civil-military coordination in order to ensure complementarity of action and to ensure that the different mandates of civilian and military actors are respected.

The Afghan authorities and the United Nations, together with national and international security forces, played important roles in the presidential election, which was an important step in the direction of a pluralist and stable democracy. A competent new

Government that is representative of the country's ethnic diversity will be vital for promoting national reconciliation ahead of the parliamentary and local elections.

Peace in Afghanistan cannot be achieved without the cooperation of its neighbouring countries. All the signatories of the Kabul Declaration on Good-neighbourly Relations must ensure that they fully implement the Declaration.

Norway welcomes the progress made in the human rights field and the crucial work of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission. However, more remains to be done. Women must be allowed to participate in all aspects of the reconstruction and peacebuilding processes. Norway is ready to work as a partner with Afghanistan in the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the new constitution. The constitution must be reflected in legislation and judicial practice, with due regard to a role for Islam that is acceptable to all Afghans.

The return of approximately 3 million refugees and internally displaced persons is a major achievement, but it is also a burden on local communities. Thus, reconstruction and socio-economic development are key challenges. Visible results and a central Government presence in the provinces are crucial. We welcome the efforts to develop a poverty reduction strategy paper as an integrated part of the national development plans.

Afghanistan is one of the major recipients of Norwegian assistance, and as from 2004 it is one of our designated partner countries in development cooperation. Norway is a strong supporter of joint financing mechanisms such as the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund for strengthening Afghan ownership and improving donor coordination. Afghan leadership can be supported only by strengthening the Government, not by sidelining it. We are therefore channelling a substantial part of our assistance to the Trust Fund and urge other donors to follow suit.

Afghan commitment to the Bonn agreement and the Berlin declaration is a prerequisite for continued international assistance. The massive turnout at the presidential election is a clear sign of the Afghan people's determination to take charge of the affairs of their own country. We must not let them down.

Mr. Sen (India): My delegation welcomes this opportunity to participate in the annual discussions in the General Assembly on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, and on international assistance for the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

The presidential election in Afghanistan, one of the last, yet the most critical, milestones of the Bonn process, was a landmark event in Afghanistan's history. Over eight million Afghan citizens, 40 per cent of whom were women, exercised their franchise. In doing so, the Afghan people defied the threat of terrorism and firmly committed themselves to the practice of democracy. They also rejected the repeated attempts of retrogressive elements to restore the ideology of obscurantism, hatred and violence.

India commends the Afghan people for the successful process through which President Karzai was elected with a significant majority. We congratulate President Karzai on his inauguration yesterday as the first democratically elected President of Afghanistan.

The next tasks in the political process are the formation of a new Government and the holding of parliamentary, provincial and local elections. We look forward to the emergence of a strong central Government that will consolidate its authority and ensure further progress towards security, stability and success of the reconstruction process. We have no doubt that the new Government will be representative of the ethnic, cultural and geographical diversity of the country. Efforts at national reconciliation and unity are essential if Afghanistan is to succeed in its nation-building endeavour. We look forward to practical consideration of parliamentary, provincial and local elections, and their conduct free from manipulation or fraud.

The report of the Secretary-General on this item (A/59/581), issued pursuant to Assembly resolutions 58/27 A and B, provides a useful overview of the key political and humanitarian developments in Afghanistan from December 2003 to November 2004. One may praise the clear analysis of social, economic and reconstruction issues. However, we believe a firmer message from the United Nations would have been appropriate and necessary for the international community to ensure stability in Afghanistan. In its paragraph 12, the report highlights the fact that "security in the south and south-east deteriorated to the

point where large areas were effectively out of bounds to the assistance community, and government officials were frequent targets of attacks". The reality of the current security situation in Afghanistan is even more serious.

The process of peace and stabilization in Afghanistan is still fragile. While no serious violent incidents took place on the day of the election, the upsurge in militant violence in the run-up to the election and in the period since has revealed that terrorism perpetrated by Taliban, Al Qaeda and Hizb-e-Islami elements continues to constitute the primary source of insecurity in Afghanistan. Their activities, with support from outside, have undermined reconstruction efforts, especially in the southern and south-eastern provinces. Increasing attacks by terrorist elements continue to represent not only the greatest threat to Afghanistan's security and stability, but also a major threat to regional and international peace and security.

The fact that the report makes almost no mention of terrorism and the threat it poses to Afghanistan and its security conveys the impression that this is no longer an issue of concern for Afghanistan, the United Nations or the international community. Moreover, by that lack, the United Nations is seen to be abdicating its primary responsibility of playing a central and impartial role in promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan, as the General Assembly resolution enjoins it to do.

At the same time, the success of the disarmament programme, as represented by the extensive demobilization and heavy weapons cantonment, has signalled a new reality. Factional leaders appear to have internalized the lessons of democracy and have resigned themselves to attempt to rule through the ballot and not the bullet. Factional violence could never represent an existential threat to Afghanistan in the way terrorist and extremist activity did and continues to do. However, recent trends indicate that that poses even less of a threat than previously imagined.

Draft resolution A/59/L.44, now under consideration and concluded as a result of broad-based consultations among Member States, calls upon the Afghan Government, with the assistance of the international community, to "continue to address the threat to the security and stability of Afghanistan posed

by Al-Qaida operatives, the Taliban and other extremist groups". It is evident that at this stage a continued international presence would be required. However, long-term stabilization of the country would require the empowerment of the Afghan central authorities and the building up of national security institutions that are led by Afghans and entrenched in Afghanistan's realities on the ground. Unfortunately, that process is not yet moving at the desired pace.

We also remain deeply concerned about the continued increase in the cultivation, production and trafficking of narcotic drugs in Afghanistan. According to the 2004 opium poppy survey of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, opium cultivation in Afghanistan increased by two thirds this year. This could undermine the political and economic reconstruction of Afghanistan and have potentially dangerous repercussions for the region and beyond. We agree with the Secretary-General on the need for additional efforts by countries through which Afghan opiates are trafficked and places where heroin abuse is a significant problem.

In view of our historical ties of friendship and cooperation with Afghanistan and the Afghan people, India has made a substantial contribution to Afghanistan's reconstruction effort. Despite our constraints and the fact that we are not a traditional donor, our present commitment over the period from 2002 to 2008 adds up to \$400 million, including 1 million tons of wheat.

In partnership with the Afghan Government, India has undertaken projects in a number of sectors, including transportation, civil aviation, information technology, health, education, agriculture, information and broadcasting, telecommunications, power transmission, banking, urban development, water resources, industry and road construction. India has also undertaken an extensive programme for rebuilding institutional capacity through which more than 780 Afghans have received training in India in various fields. Our projects have reached out to people in virtually all parts of Afghanistan.

In the coming period we expect to focus more on projects in the infrastructure sector, including roads and power. India's economic assistance programme in Afghanistan is guided by Afghan priorities and ownership. Our relations with Afghanistan are bilateral and direct. The underlying principle of our cooperation

with Afghanistan remains our sole desire to see Afghanistan emerge as a strong, united, independent and prosperous country. We wish to see full consolidation of authority by the central Government. Our efforts in reconstruction and other sectors will continue to be directed towards those ends.

For the benefit of interested delegations, we have placed copies of a brochure entitled “Afghans First: India at Work in Afghanistan”, which details India’s assistance programme in Afghanistan, at the side of the General Assembly Hall.

As part of our efforts to encourage trade, India signed a preferential trade agreement with Afghanistan in March 2003, which provides duty-free or reduced duty access for items of export interest to Afghanistan.

Afghanistan’s transition from retrogressive fundamentalism to democracy and development has been impressive. Yet the international community cannot allow itself to forget that the challenges to Afghanistan’s future and stability remain insidious and deep-rooted. It was not so long ago that the Taliban and Al Qaeda were defeated, but they were not vanquished. Those forces of terrorism and extremism continue to pose the greatest threat to Afghanistan’s very existence. The international community would do well not only to recognize the nature of that threat but to confront it head-on.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my country’s wholehearted support for President Karzai’s leadership in the best interests of his country. India, like all other like-minded countries, stands for a strong, united, sovereign and independent Afghanistan.

Mr. Rock (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Canada wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security. On behalf of the Government of Canada, I wish to extend congratulations to President Karzai on his inauguration yesterday as President of Afghanistan. We wish him every success in his presidency.

The report of the Secretary-General (A/59/581) provides a useful picture of the progress made to date in Afghanistan and the challenges remaining.

I would like to begin by expressing the relief that we feel now that the United Nations workers taken hostage in Afghanistan have finally been released. Our thoughts go with them as they recover from this ordeal.

We strongly condemn this hostage-taking as an abhorrent act of terrorism. Such cowardly acts threaten to undo the accomplishments that we have achieved to date. We trust that the perpetrators of this hostage-taking will be brought to justice. That will send a significant message to all who wish to support Afghanistan that such acts will not be tolerated.

Canada is concerned about continued threats and ongoing violence directed against humanitarian and development workers in Afghanistan. In 2004, some 59 non-governmental organization and election workers lost their lives. There must be no impunity for those who perpetrate these acts. The utmost must be done to ensure safe and unhindered access for such staff so that they can continue to do their important work.

As we recognize that Afghanistan is still in a fragile state, we are nonetheless heartened by the remarkable progress that it has made over the past year. The adoption of a constitution and the presidential election mark watersheds in Afghanistan’s transition towards democracy. The fact that the elections took place almost without incident is testament to how far the country has come in such a short time. With the help of the international community, Afghanistan has set out on a path that will enable it to become a stable, democratic and self-sufficient State. We know that path will be long and sometimes riddled with obstacles. But Canada is resolved to stay the course and to support Afghanistan.

Canada agrees with the Secretary-General that much more needs to be achieved towards the fundamental goal of strengthening the capacity of the Government at all levels and extending its authority to all parts of the country. In its approach, Canada recognizes that there is a whole series of factors — including security-sector reform, the promotion of human rights, good governance and economic reconstruction — that are mutually reinforcing and therefore must be addressed simultaneously if we want to establish meaningful and sustainable change in Afghanistan.

(*spoke in English*)

Afghanistan is Canada’s single largest recipient of bilateral aid: since 2001, Canada has set aside \$616 million, of which the last \$250 million will be spent in the period 2005-2009. Canada has respected the request of the Afghan Government to deliver assistance through the national priority programmes.

Canada also continues to make a significant contribution to NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). It was a Canadian, Lieutenant-General Rick Hillier, who commanded the Force with such skill and ability in the period February to August 2004. Our contributions to ISAF, as well as our continuing participation in coalition efforts as part of Operation Enduring Freedom, are helping to improve the security environment, allowing reconstruction to proceed and providing room for the Government to become truly established.

And Canada is planning to do more. As announced by Prime Minister Martin during his visit to the General Assembly just a few months ago, we will be undertaking a provincial reconstruction team in 2005 as part of the international effort to assist in establishing the conditions necessary to ensure continued progress.

Despite those efforts, we are very much aware that there are complex challenges that remain — for example, the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and the efforts to counter the narcotics trade and the related threat posed by the uncooperative militia leaders. There is also the promotion and protection of human rights and the building of sound governance institutions across Afghanistan.

The drug trade in particular is troubling. It is not just a domestic Afghan issue; it is an international issue. The success of Afghans and of the international community in addressing that issue will be key to enhancing the prospects for long-term peace and stability. Efforts to curb drug production and trafficking have been hindered by the central Government's limited presence outside Kabul and by the lack of viable economic alternatives, particularly in rural development. With profits from the narcotics trade and control over customs revenues bolstering their power, some militia leaders will not likely be compelled to comply with DDR and other Government directives.

While security remains a real and immediate concern, we cannot overlook other issues of equal importance, such as the promotion and protection of human rights, including women's human rights and gender equality, the building of a sound legal framework with access to justice for all Afghans, the creation of accountable governance institutions and the

development of viable livelihoods, without which all of Afghanistan's gains will be unsustainable and the international community's investment will be lost.

We are aware that we need to continue to work with the Afghan Government at all levels to assist in enhancing its capacity to govern effectively, transparently and democratically. The legitimacy and credibility of the emerging Afghan governance institutions are crucial. In an effort to assist the Afghan central Government in building its legitimacy, the international community should be supportive of that Government in establishing a range of mechanisms to marginalize illicit behaviour and to address past injustices by ending impunity. We therefore welcome President Karzai's commitment to selecting a Cabinet that reflects those principles, and we advocate an intensive effort to create a sound legal architecture and an appropriately timed and sequenced approach to transitional justice.

As in my country, independent scrutiny of Government actions is important in Afghanistan. Canada supports the work being conducted by Ms. Sema Samar and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission. We want to emphasize that the independence of the Commission continues to be essential to its success in ensuring respect for human rights in Afghanistan and in addressing past human rights abuses. We urge the Government of Afghanistan to formalize that institution.

An immediate priority is ensuring that the groundwork is laid for parliamentary, provincial and district elections. Canada urges the Government of Afghanistan to make the necessary decisions on technical and policy issues to allow for planning to begin in earnest. Canada will continue to support the establishment of a secure environment and democratic development in Afghanistan as key factors in achieving lasting change.

Let me close by observing that Afghanistan has had a truly remarkable year and has overcome extraordinary challenges. But, of course, the work is not yet complete. In the coming year, it will be crucial to address the interconnected issues to which I have referred, involving DDR, the narcotics trade, militia leaders and good governance. Afghanistan and all our colleagues here and around the world can count on Canada's enthusiastic involvement in that process as we work in common cause towards those shared objectives.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan) (*spoke in Russian*): I should like at the outset to express gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his most recent report on the situation in Afghanistan (A/59/581). In our view, it covers a period that was decisive for the country — a period when the Afghan people, with the assistance of the international community, once again reaffirmed its choice as it embarked on the path of building its future. From our perspective, the report's analysis of the situation in the country is of the utmost importance for the implementation of further measures aimed at building a stable and democratic society in Afghanistan.

The delegation of Uzbekistan associates itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan on behalf of the countries members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and we support the positions set out in that statement.

As this year comes to a close, the world has witnessed an important event: the international community's coordinated efforts and resolve have made it possible to achieve, for the first time, an effective result in stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan. An important step has been taken towards the strengthening of its statehood; I am thinking, first and foremost, of the adoption of the new Constitution and the holding of the presidential elections.

On 9 October 2004, an event took place that was of major importance not only for Afghanistan, but for all of progressive mankind: a President of Afghanistan was democratically elected for the first time. We welcome the election of President Karzai, whose inauguration took place yesterday, and we express our full support for him. We note with satisfaction that the delegation of Uzbekistan, headed by our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Sodiq Safoev, had the honour to participate in that wonderful ceremony.

Uzbekistan welcomes the progress achieved in implementing the decisions of the Bonn and Berlin conferences with regard to the building of an effective State administration and the formation of such elements as the army, law-enforcement agencies and the judicial system, in addition to the further social and economic development of the country and the continued implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme.

Unfortunately, however, hostage-taking and attacks by terrorist groups have shown that peace in

Afghanistan, which is such an important prerequisite for the rebuilding of the country, is still fragile. Uzbekistan has on numerous occasions stated its vision for the establishment of the conditions necessary for peace and stability in Afghanistan. In a nutshell, they are the following.

First, the demilitarization of military and political factions must be stepped up. Here, we welcome further steps to enhance the authority and resources of the central Government of Afghanistan, in particular, strengthening its administrative functions in the provinces. The process of the collection of stockpiles of weapons must be accelerated and the potential for the reintegration of demobilized soldiers and officers into the economy must be expanded. Well-controlled and well-equipped agencies must be established for the military forces, the security system and, most important, a united national armed forces.

Secondly, the formation of State agencies would enable, in the light of ethnic and regional interests, the impact of the central Government to be felt throughout the country.

Thirdly, international cooperation must be built up in order to eliminate terrorism, extremism and the illegal drug trade.

Fourthly, we must ensure consistency with the implementation of the decisions of the Tokyo meeting and the International Conference on Afghanistan, inter alia concerning the fulfilment of pledges to provide financial assistance to Afghanistan.

Finally, States must renounce policies of interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan.

The figures cited in the recent United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime review regarding the ominous growth in poppy cultivation and the processing of opium in Afghanistan cannot fail to be a source of profound concern. It has become obvious that, without speeding up the implementation of major structural changes in the Afghan economy, drugs, linked with terrorism, will become the major threat to the national security of the country and the effective functioning of its Government. We call for an expansion of assistance to Afghanistan to enhance its ability to counter that threat. Given the fact that Central Asia is in the forefront of the fight against drug trafficking, we are also counting on support from the international community to support the initiative to

establish a regional information and coordination centre in Central Asia to combat the transport of illegal drugs and the crime linked to the illegal drug trade.

I would like to draw attention to the importance of using existing resources, including the infrastructure and experience of neighbouring countries, for the economic recovery of Afghanistan. In that context, I would like once again to emphasize that Uzbekistan considers Afghanistan to be an integral entity of the Central Asian territorial space and is in favour of its participation in regional integration processes. Uzbekistan is providing assistance to the Afghan people in, inter alia, rebuilding and constructing communications, electric power lines, electric power stations and irrigation facilities. To create the most favourable possible conditions for the transportation of goods into Afghanistan, the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, together with the appropriate United Nations agencies, has established a mechanism for the coordination of flows of goods, which includes international organizations and donor countries. As of today, more than 2.5 million tons of goods have been sent to Afghanistan via the Termez-Hairaton route. In this context, Uzbekistan welcomes draft resolution A/59/L.44, introduced today by the delegation of Germany, and is among its sponsors.

Mr. İlkin (Turkey): Turkey has already aligned itself with the statement made by the representative of the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union. In the light of Turkey's deep-rooted historical and friendly ties with Afghanistan, I am taking the floor to further highlight a number of points with regard to my country's views concerning the recent developments in Afghanistan.

Let me first say that Turkey is a sponsor of draft resolution A/59/L.44 which we feel objectively reflects both the successes achieved and certain challenges encountered in the implementation of the Bonn Agreement. We expect that the text as a whole will relay a strong message of solidarity with the Afghan people and, at the same time, reaffirm the determination and commitment of the international community to remain seized of the developments in that country.

The adoption of a Constitution on 4 January 2004 and the direct presidential elections held on 9 October 2004 constitute important milestones in the Bonn process and reaffirm the commitment of the Afghan

people to achieve reconciliation, peace and stability in the country. In that context, we hope and expect that the new political structure will indeed reflect the multi-ethnic nature of the country and will be capable of reaching out to all communities.

On the other hand, we believe that the approach to security issues in Afghanistan should be guided by the fundamental principle of the indivisibility of security, and that such issues should thus be handled in a comprehensive manner. We hope that the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme will continue to gain momentum. In that respect, the decision taken by General Dostum to initiate the disarmament and demobilization of the 53rd division is a concrete step in the right direction. It should encourage other leaders to follow that path, contributing to the reinforcement of peace and stability. It is equally important that security vacuums not be created following the completion of DDR programmes.

As of February 2005, we will be assuming, for the second time, the leadership of the International Security Assistance Force, with the participation of a large Turkish military contingent, in order to consolidate peace, tranquillity and law and order in Afghanistan. Indeed, as a country always willing to contribute to the cause of peace, security and stability throughout the world, Turkey is prepared to assist and support Afghanistan in every way.

In addition to actively collaborating with the international community for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, Turkey is carrying out its own reconstruction projects in the country. In the field of health, for instance, the rehabilitation of Shiberghan and Andkhoy hospitals were completed last summer, and those hospitals are now fully equipped to serve their patients. In the same manner, the Meymaneh hospital will soon become operational.

Combating drug production and illicit trafficking constitutes one of the top priorities of Afghanistan. To achieve this goal, the implementation of a comprehensive and long-term strategy, coupled with the creation of alternative means of living, which will offer new opportunities to the Afghan people, is imperative. The eradication of poppy fields should be seen in that larger context.

Last but not least, allow me to commend the untiring and dedicated work of both the Afghan leadership and the United Nations Assistance Mission

in Afghanistan in responding to the great challenges ahead. Let me also reiterate the strong commitment of the Turkish Government to the security, unity, reconstruction and welfare of Afghanistan.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/32 of 19 November 2002, I call on the observer of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Ms. Filip (Inter-Parliamentary Union): It gives me pleasure to address the General Assembly today during this debate on a matter which is very closely linked to the mandate of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). I will focus my remarks on the need for urgent international assistance in building representative institutions in Afghanistan.

We believe that strong, representative institutions, especially parliaments, functioning in an accountable and transparent manner, are the cornerstone of democracy and good governance. Afghanistan, which is the focus of our discussion today, is one of the countries where the IPU pursues this vision.

After 25 years of war and political instability, Afghanistan has just chosen a President, following a hotly contested and largely democratic presidential election. The next step in setting up democratic institutions will be the establishment, by the fall of 2005, of a modern parliament. Under the new Constitution, adopted in January 2004, a bicameral National Assembly will be created, with an upper house, the Meshrano Jirga, and a lower house, the Wolesi Jirga. Because of the country's lack of recent parliamentary experience, the Afghan authorities face a daunting challenge in establishing and sustaining a viable legislature. The IPU is committed to making every effort to support them in achieving this objective.

In cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Country Office in Afghanistan, the Inter-Parliamentary Union carried out a monthlong needs assessment mission to Kabul last October and November. The mission assisted the Afghan authorities in identifying the needs of the future National Assembly. It identified major areas where action needs to be taken as a matter of urgency if the future parliament is to convene on the appointed date and if it is to be an effective legislature that is representative and which meets the expectations of the people of Afghanistan.

First of all, it is important that an institutional legal framework be in place. In other words, legislative texts, including the provisional rules of procedure of both houses, will have to be prepared.

Secondly, if the new parliament is to be able to carry out the tasks assigned to it by the Constitution, action should be taken as soon as possible to train the future parliamentary staff, so that they have at least a basic knowledge of their new work. Such professional development must also be extended to the members of the Assembly once they are elected.

Thirdly, there is obviously a need to direct efforts towards improving the infrastructure earmarked for the National Assembly, so that it can be adapted to the cultural and religious specificities of the country, as well as to the special needs of people with disabilities, as enshrined in the Constitution itself. There is no gainsaying the fact that information and communication technologies in the newly established institution will be crucial for this nascent body to function well and coherently, both internally and in terms of its relations and interaction with the broader Afghan society.

In addition to those areas of focus, the IPU stresses that special efforts must be made to address such fundamental issues as the institution's bilingualism, as it will operate in Dari and Pashto; the full participation of women in parliament after nearly 10 years of Taliban rule — and I would mention here that the IPU has welcomed the fact that the Constitution provides equal rights to men and women and guarantees that women will make up at least 25 per cent of representatives in the lower house of parliament; and thirdly, relations between the Assembly and the public, including the most vulnerable groups.

Once again, the new National Assembly must be accessible, transparent and representative of all Afghan citizens, whatever their ethnic origin or gender. It must act as the interface between the State and the people by pursuing an agenda that promotes public outreach.

The new parliament will be inaugurated at a time when Afghanistan is in need of a strong legislative body. That institution should have the capacity to devise and adopt in a speedy fashion a whole range of legislation that will govern a new Afghanistan after so many years of conflict and instability. As a forum for the confrontation of ideas and for the forging of

consensus around key national issues and policies, it will have a major role to play to ensure that past tensions do not come to the fore again, giving rise to unnecessary strife and suffering for the people of Afghanistan. It is in this way that it can contribute to the establishment of conditions conducive to lasting development and peace.

The IPU stands committed to working with its Afghan and international partners in furthering those objectives. The programme of action proposed by the IPU/UNDP mission provides a framework for such cooperation, thereby ensuring greater coherence in the actions undertaken by the international community to foster democratic institutions in Afghanistan in the coming months.

The President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 27 and sub-item (d) of agenda item 39 for this meeting.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/59/L.44, as orally corrected.

Draft resolution A/59/L.44 has two parts: part A is entitled “The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security”, and

part B is entitled “Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan”.

Before we vote on the draft resolution, I should like to inform the Assembly that, since the introduction of A/59/L.44, the following countries have become sponsors: India, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/59/L.44 as orally corrected?

Draft resolution A/59/L.44, as orally corrected, was adopted (resolution 59/112 A and B).

The President (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of agenda item 27 and sub-item (d) of agenda item 39.

Programme of work

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform members that the second informal meeting of the plenary on the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change will take place at 10 a.m. tomorrow, 9 December.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.