



# General Assembly

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Official Records

*President:* Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann . . . . . (Nicaragua)

*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

## Agenda item 114 (continued)

### Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations

#### (n) Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States

##### Draft resolution (A/63/L.20)

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to introduce draft resolution A/63/L.20.

**Mr. Ettalhi** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, I take great pleasure in congratulating you for the second time on your wise, effective conduct of this sixty-third session of the General Assembly. On behalf of my country, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, in its capacity as Chairman of the Arab Group for the month of November 2008, and on behalf of Algeria, Bahrain, the Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen, I have the honour of introducing draft resolution A/63/L.20, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States".

The draft resolution emphasizes the need to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and other organizations and specialized agencies of the United Nations system and the League of Arab States

in order to achieve the common goals of the two organizations. It also requests the Secretariat of the United Nations and the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States, within their respective fields of competence, to intensify further their cooperation for the realization of the purposes and principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations, the strengthening of international peace and security, economic and social development, disarmament, decolonization, self-determination and the eradication of all forms of racism and racial discrimination.

Draft resolution A/63/L.20 also calls upon the specialized agencies and other organizations and programmes of the United Nations system to increase their cooperation with the League of Arab States and its specialized organizations in the priority sectors of energy, rural development, desertification and green belts, training and vocational education, technology, environment, information and documentation, trade and finance, water resources, development of the agricultural sector, empowerment of women, transport, communications and information, promotion of the role of the private sector and capacity-building.

It also encourages periodic consultation between representatives of the Secretariat of the United Nations and of the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States in order to strengthen coordination mechanisms between the two organizations.

We hope that the draft resolution will enjoy the support of all delegations, and we are sure that it will be adopted by consensus, because it seeks greater

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international cooperation towards achieving the goals of the United Nations, in accordance with the text and spirit of the Organization's Charter.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/63/L.20.

Before proceeding to the vote, I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, Bosnia and Herzegovina has joined the list of sponsors.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/63/L.20?

*Draft resolution A/63/L.20 was adopted (resolution 63/17).*

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (n) of agenda item 114?

*It was so decided.*

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Before proceeding to the next agenda item, I would like to appeal to those Member States intending to submit draft resolutions on the remaining sub-items of agenda item 114 to do so as soon as possible.

## **Agenda item 17**

### **The situation in Afghanistan**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/372)**

#### **Draft resolution (A/63/L.17)**

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Germany to introduce draft resolution A/63/L.17.

**Mr. Matussek** (Germany): As in previous years, Germany has the honour to introduce today the draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/63/L.17). The draft resolution is the result of several weeks of intensive consultations in the General Assembly. First of all, I would like to thank all the delegations involved for their constructive input and their never-ending spirit of cooperation.

We fully support the statement that will be delivered by the French presidency of the European Union. However, as facilitator, Germany would like to highlight the following aspects.

The reconstruction and development of Afghanistan is at the heart of the efforts of the international community. Our common objective is to help to improve the everyday lives of Afghans. By adopting the draft resolution by consensus we, the members of the General Assembly, can once again emphasize our solidarity with the Afghan people and send a strong message of support for the efforts of the international community to help the Afghan people rebuild their country and develop their democratic society after devastating years of Taliban terror.

Seven years ago, Afghanistan was a country where the population generally did not have access to basic health services, where human rights were violated and where women were denied access to education or public office. Against that background, we can clearly acknowledge the very important and encouraging achievements of the Afghan Government, supported by the international community. Today, 85 per cent of the Afghan population has access to medical treatment; roads, schools, bridges and water infrastructure have been built or reconstructed; and large parts of the country have been successfully cleared of landmines. To all those who want to question the successes achieved in Afghanistan, our answer is: Every strip of land that is cultivated by a farmer again, every child that can attend school again, every new hospital and every kilometre of new road is a small victory of humanity.

The Paris Declaration provides the strategy and road map for the renewed and strengthened efforts of the Government of Afghanistan and the international community in facing the remaining challenges. And we stress the importance of the Paris commitments being translated into concrete political action in a timely fashion.

We strongly support the concept of increasing Afghan ownership in all aspects of governance, as exemplified in the launch of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, and we would like to recall that the Afghanistan Compact will remain the agreed basis of our work. Germany clearly welcomes the leading role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Kai Eide, in coordinating the international civilian effort.

I would like to underline the need to ensure that UNAMA is adequately resourced to fulfil its extended

mandate. Germany has supported UNAMA substantially from its inception and we will continue to do so. On the part of the Afghan Government, we see a need for further efforts to improve governance across the board. We encourage the Afghan Government to take further decisive action in combating terrorism, drug production and trafficking, including precursors to drugs, and corruption and to continue the reform of the justice sector in order to be able to continue to meaningfully improve the human rights situation.

In that regard, we welcome the recent decisions of the Afghan Government reflecting the invigorated political will to strengthen the fight against corruption, build up the Afghan National Police and enhance economic growth through rural development.

Germany is strongly committed to continuing its comprehensive support of the international efforts under the umbrella of the United Nations. My Government recently increased its development aid for Afghanistan to a total of approximately €170 million in 2008, representing an increase of €30 million. Also, the funds for humanitarian aid and humanitarian demining have been significantly increased in 2008 to more than €15 million.

In light of the imminent food crisis, we have made available additional funds at short notice. Germany decided to substantially increase its personnel for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to 4,500 soldiers — an increase of 1,000 soldiers. At the same time, we are ready to double the number of German police officers in the framework of the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan in line with the Union's efforts to reinforce the Mission.

The international community is appalled by the significant increase in the number of attacks against aid workers, convoys and facilities, as stated in the recent report of the Secretary-General. As reflected in the draft resolution, we share great concern about the number of civilian casualties, mainly because of the increased violent and terrorist activity of the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other extremist and criminal groups and their asymmetric tactics. ISAF has taken the necessary steps to minimize the risk of unintended civilian casualties and has installed procedures for after-action review. We recognize the need for continued efforts by the international forces to avoid civilian casualties during military operations.

Intensified and improved regional cooperation in all fields will be key to the success of all international assistance to improve the living conditions in Afghanistan. We would like to take the opportunity to encourage all regional partners to continue their initiatives towards improved regional cooperation in all fields.

Last but not least, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the women and men involved in the work on the ground in Afghanistan, whether they be security personnel, humanitarian aid workers, diplomats or others. They serve in order to help to create a better future for the people of Afghanistan and for all of us. They deserve our greatest respect.

In conclusion, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my colleague Ambassador Zahir Tanin, and his Minister Counsellor, Erfani Ayoob, for their trust and friendship and for the excellent cooperation we have been privileged to encounter, and not only in recent days. May Afghanistan successfully continue down the road towards peace, security and development. The upcoming elections will be an important step for their country.

The General Assembly's approval of the draft resolution today will be a clear sign that the international community remains willing and prepared to actively assist the Afghan delegation and its country in that endeavour.

**Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan):** It is a great honour for me to address the Assembly on the occasion of the consideration of the annual resolution on the situation in Afghanistan. I would like to thank the delegation of Germany for their dedicated work in drafting and negotiating the draft resolution before us (A/63/L.17) and to convey my gratitude for the support of all of its sponsors. With the draft, their voices have spoken out in renewed solidarity with a stronger, more peaceful Afghanistan.

It has been more than seven years since international forces entered our country. With so much time having passed, and with so much focus on particular complexities, we may sometimes lose sight of the original noble purpose of our work in Afghanistan.

What is that noble purpose? We are in Afghanistan to prevent the malady of terrorism from infesting a nation and the world. We are here to

proclaim together that never again will the Taliban regime have control of a country and crush the hopes, dreams and lives of its own people. Never again should Al-Qaida have sanctuaries in Afghanistan and elsewhere to project its extremist terror with the aim of killing thousands of innocent people across the world.

We are also here so that the region and the world can enjoy the new wealth and prosperity of a stable Afghanistan that can offer new avenues for economic cooperation and trade routes. We are here so that a strong Afghanistan can serve as an example of a democratic Islamic country that can unite communities and peoples of all faiths and cultures.

Let us carry that original purpose as the torch lighting the way against the dark challenges that lie before us today. Those challenges are critical. Terrorists are committing increasingly brutal acts, killing teachers, aid workers and families. Terrorist activities also have an increasingly strong correlation with crime and narcotics. In addition, the Government of Afghanistan faces serious obstacles in its quest to fight corruption, hold elections, build a strong justice sector and increase economic development. Most importantly, a food shortage is threatening more than 8 million Afghans this coming winter, which is only a few weeks away.

Simultaneously, the world is facing the worst financial and credit crisis since the Second World War. Just as terrorism poses a threat without boundaries, the financial squeeze is affecting us all. While Afghanistan is fighting serious challenges with international ramifications, there is also a tightening of resources. It seems that we must do more with less.

To meet that challenge, we in Afghanistan need to embark on a smart and sustainable strategy that can harness our resources most effectively. Such a strategy must always be guided primarily by the interests of the people of Afghanistan and have as its foremost goal the creation of a self-sustaining nation. The strategy should have the following components.

First, Afghan ownership should increase at every level and in every dimension. The Afghan National Army and National Police must increase in number and in strength for Afghans to protect Afghans. To that end, the Government of Afghanistan has ambitious goals to increase training, develop a comprehensive reform strategy and expand the size of our army to 134,000

troops by the year 2010. To meet those goals, we need continued international support.

In addition, the Government of Afghanistan is fighting corruption through the reorganization of its ministries, the work of an Independent Directorate of Local Governance and the launching of a High Office of Oversight to combat corruption. International support for those Government initiatives would allow it to improve the delivery of national services to the Afghan people.

The Government of Afghanistan also aims to increase Afghan ownership of reconstruction and development efforts. While international support is necessary to strengthen our agricultural sector, create new infrastructure projects and sources of energy, and find new areas for local economy, we hope that international support will increasingly be delivered through the framework provided by our Afghan National Development Strategy.

Furthermore, the upcoming elections are a most important opportunity to increase ownership of Afghanistan by qualified Afghans. Fair, credible and timely elections are essential to strengthening legitimacy and creating a self-sustaining Afghanistan. However, security is the main precondition for holding elections. The Government of Afghanistan is hoping for the support of the international community in its efforts to provide that security.

The ingredients of a political solution to the situation in Afghanistan must involve the Afghan people and their communities. In order for any talks for reconciliation and the peace process to be successful, we must win the confidence of the Afghan people by including them substantively in the process.

Secondly, international involvement should refocus on the overall security of the Afghan people. The Government of Afghanistan recognizes the need for increased international troops to quell today's insecurity. To ensure that the increase in international involvement would effectively protect the Afghan people, we should ascertain that, first, international troops in Afghanistan should expand their focus. Their goal must go beyond the targeting of the Taliban; the goal should be to protect the comprehensive security of the Afghan people. Moreover, the Government of Afghanistan urges that any increase in deployment of troops be accomplished through further collaboration with the Government. Thirdly, international troops

need to review the problem of civilian casualties. Although the Taliban are the reason for the majority of civilian casualties, the international forces for their part can do more to reduce the risk of civilian casualties. To build a self-sustaining Afghanistan, the people must be able to trust their Government and its allies to protect their lives and their families.

In addition, the Government of Afghanistan deeply appreciates the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to address the human development component of security. Its mandate of delivering aid more effectively is an enormously important one at this time of limited resources. But in order for Kai Eide and UNAMA to accomplish that task, the financial resources they need to operate effectively must be addressed by Member States. In turn, the Government of Afghanistan pledges to continue to work collaboratively with UNAMA.

Thirdly, a re-emphasis on regional partnerships is necessary. The challenges Afghanistan faces today are regional challenges. The Taliban and Al-Qaida, the movement of refugees and the narcotics trade are transborder problems. Moreover, regional solutions promise great regional benefits in the areas of security, trade, energy, infrastructure and more positive people-to-people relationships. Thus, we should strive together to find regional solutions to our shared challenges. Our first priority is the relationship Afghanistan shares with our friends in Pakistan. They suffer equal harm at the hands of the Taliban and Al-Qaida. To fight the terrorists who would kill our people, we must work together to eliminate their sanctuaries. The Government of Afghanistan increasingly recognizes that the only lasting peace is one that is forged together with our allies in the region. Thus, the support of the international community for such regional efforts is essential.

At this time of great challenge, there is also reason for great hope. Over the past seven years, we have taken some significant steps forward. We have built schools, health clinics, roads and telecommunications infrastructure. We are making progress on human rights and the rule of law. Even as we speak, we are seeing a breakthrough in counter-narcotics efforts.

As we stated in October, the Taliban is fighting a war of perception. Its goal is to persuade the Afghan people that the international community is failing,

especially at this time of transition following the elections in the United States. To counter that, we must be equally vigilant in demonstrating our successes to the Afghan people. We know that there are two Afghanists: one conveyed by news reports broadcasting only the atrocities; another experienced by millions of Afghans building daily lives in peace. Let us not forget this second Afghanistan. Our efforts are not in vain and we are making progress.

Today is also a day of great hope because there is a new beginning in two of Afghanistan's most important allies. With Pakistan's new President, His Excellency Mr. Asif Ali Zardari, we are witnessing the first moves towards collaboration and cooperation that we hope will lead to peace and security. With the United States, we welcome the recent historic election and look forward to working with the President-elect, Mr. Barack Obama. We appreciate the continued support of the United States in Afghanistan.

Today is a most important day. We have reminded ourselves of the original noble purpose of our work in Afghanistan. Success in Afghanistan is as vital today as it was seven years ago. And, in the context of a global financial crisis, we have identified the components of a smart and sustainable strategy to harness our resources most effectively.

For our part, the Government of Afghanistan is fully and absolutely dedicated to creating a stronger Afghanistan. Every international commitment made today to meeting the objectives of today's draft resolution will be matched twofold by efforts on the part of our Government. In the upcoming months, let us together have the courage to determinedly and resolutely walk the path towards a self-sustaining, peaceful, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan.

**Mr. Ripert (France)** (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the European Union. Croatia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Moldavia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine align themselves with this declaration, the detailed text of which has been distributed. I will limit myself to making a few points.

The annual resolution of the General Assembly on the situation in Afghanistan is an opportunity for the international community to show its unanimous commitment to the consolidation of a stable, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan. We understand the scale of the challenges that must be met in order to

achieve those objectives. This is the time not to lose heart, however, but for patient and determined action. We thank the German delegation, the principal author of the draft resolution before us (A/63/L.17), which was able to achieve a consensus that reflects the international community's resolve.

The United Nations plays a leading role in Afghanistan, which is embodied by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kai Eide, who enjoys the full support of the European Union. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has been entrusted with an enhanced mandate, specifically in the coordination of international assistance. It is essential that all international actors actively support that role. We must also give UNAMA adequate financial and human resources.

The developments of recent months present mixed results. We have seen real progress, in particular in the continued strengthening of the Afghan National Army, in the economic area and in the fight against narcotics trafficking. However, there also continue to be several areas of concern: the security situation, the risk of a humanitarian crisis and the human rights situation. The problem of good governance remains a challenge that will require increased efforts. We are also concerned about the issue of civilian casualties. Let us not forget that the vast majority of those victims is caused by the indiscriminate violence of terrorists and extremists. Nonetheless, the European Union is aware of the need for international forces to vigorously pursue efforts to avoid all civilian casualties.

The difficulties of the situation should not, however, obscure the progress made over the past seven years in the economic and social sectors as well as in the consolidation of democratic institutions. The Afghan people clearly expressed their choice for democracy and stability in 2004 and 2005. We are ready to provide strong support to the Afghan authorities in preparation for the elections in 2009 and 2010.

We share the sense of urgency expressed by the Secretary-General in his report (A/63/372). The international community and Afghanistan have a strategy, defined in London in 2006 and now continued in the Afghan National Development Strategy, as well as a road map developed at the International Conference in support of Afghanistan held in Paris in

June 2008. The road map is based on a renewed partnership centred on mutual commitments to better take into account the specific needs of the population.

To implement those commitments, decisive measures must be taken rapidly, not only by the international community but also by the Afghan authorities. The Afghan authorities will need to assume an increasing share of the responsibility and, to that end, they must step up efforts to improve governance and fight corruption.

Afghanistan and the United Nations can count on the unwavering commitment of the European Union, which is the second largest financial contributor to the reconstruction of Afghanistan. It contributes in particular to building the capacity of the Afghan police, particularly through the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL), which will be significantly strengthened. EUPOL acts in full respect of the leading role taken by the Afghan authorities and in close cooperation with the other international actors.

With regard to the military situation, 25 member countries of the European Union participate in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Together, they compose half of the total ISAF contingent. They renewed their commitment at the NATO summit in Bucharest.

I would like to pay tribute to the courage and determination of the soldiers who are fighting in our name, often at the cost of their lives. I would like to express my condolences to the Spanish Government, to the victims and to the families of the two soldiers who died in an attack on Sunday. I would also like to recognize the work of all humanitarian personnel, of both the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, who operate in increasingly dangerous conditions and who also often risk their lives.

If a solution to the challenges facing Afghanistan is to be sustainable, it must be political. To that end, we must develop a comprehensive approach based on a better integration of civilian and military efforts. The European Union encourages the development of a national political dialogue with as broad a participation as possible at all levels. That dialogue should be conducted in full respect of the Constitution and under the leadership of Afghan authorities.

Stability in Afghanistan is also intrinsically linked to the stability of the region. In that regard, we

welcome the strengthening of the cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours against such threats as terrorism and drug trafficking.

The European Union noted with interest the peace jirga between Pakistan and Afghan officials held on 27 and 28 October. The European Union expresses its support for that hopeful process. The European Union also marks its appreciation for the efforts by the Pakistani authorities to deny access to their territory to terrorist groups targeting Afghanistan and encourages both countries to step up their cooperation.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm the resolute commitment of the European Union in support of the efforts of the Afghan people so that they may attain peace, security and development as soon as possible.

**Mr. Churkin** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): It is a great honour for me to speak on behalf of the States members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), namely, 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.

Our countries maintain long-standing and close relations with Afghanistan. One of the important priorities of the activities of the SCO is to provide assistance in developing Afghanistan's new statehood and to establish sustainable democratic institutions in that country. As close neighbours of Afghanistan, we are of course concerned about the serious problems and challenges that State faces today, as they adversely affect the situation in the region. The continuing deterioration of the military and political situation in Afghanistan and the increasing rise in drug trafficking, transborder organized crime and other threats call for concerted action by the international community.

The member States of our Organization have been actively involved, both bilaterally and multilaterally, in efforts to help provide security and stability on the territory of Afghanistan and to assist with its social and economic reconstruction. We will continue to use the organization's Afghanistan contact group and other mechanisms to halt threats emanating from the territory of that country.

The security situation remains a source of serious concern, given the intensified terrorist activity by the Taliban, Al-Qaida forces and other extremists. The

scale of terrorist attacks in Kabul and other regions of the country and the increasingly frequent attacks on humanitarian personnel and United Nations staff members are evidence of aggression by radical forces who are striving to gain power and who are ready to sacrifice the lives of peaceful civilians in order to achieve their goals and gain control over the country.

In that context, we believe it is essential that we not reverse the policy of isolating extremist leaders, especially those who are on the sanctions list of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999), while leaving open the opportunity for rank-and-file Taliban members who are not tainted by military crimes to return to peaceful lives. It is only on the basis of that understanding that the process of national reconciliation can be effective.

We pay special attention to combating drug trafficking, which has become one of the main sources of financing terrorist activities. Increasingly, terrorists and drug dealers coordinate their activities closely. At the same time, unfortunately, international efforts to combat the illicit production of, and trafficking in, drugs from the territory of Afghanistan remain ineffective. The large-scale production of drugs in Afghanistan poses a real threat to the entire international community.

In that context, we think it important to intensify antidrug efforts both on the territory of Afghanistan itself — including the destruction of drug crops, the prosecution of drug dealers, the introduction of alternative agricultural crops and efforts to curb unemployment — as well as around it, by setting up a system of antidrug and financial security belts, with a coordinating role for the United Nations and with the involvement of neighbouring countries. It is not just by intercepting drug shipments that we will achieve our goals, but also by tightening control over transnational money transfers derived from the proceeds of illicit drug trafficking, money laundering and other criminal activities, including the financing of terrorism.

SCO States believe that it is necessary for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which is deployed in Afghanistan under a Security Council mandate, to pay more attention to the task of countering the production of, and smuggling in, Afghan drugs — of course, in cooperation with the Government of Afghanistan and neighbouring and other concerned countries. It is important that

resolution 1833 (2008), which was recently adopted by the Security Council, focuses the efforts of ISAF on strengthening cooperation with the Government of Afghanistan and other interested stakeholders, including regional ones. Given the close link between terrorist activities and drug production, ISAF's efforts will not be fully effective without combating the drug threat.

We are continuing our joint efforts to establish close interaction with other interested countries and international and regional organizations to establish a broad partnership network to counter terrorist and drug threats. We are making practical preparations for a special conference on Afghanistan, to be convened under the aegis of the SCO, to discuss joint efforts aimed at countering terrorism, illicit drug trafficking and organized crime. We hope that that initiative will be supported by the United Nations and all the States actively involved in providing assistance to Afghanistan.

We share the Secretary-General's opinion that the civilian population of Afghanistan must be afforded protection not only from terrorists but also from the unintended consequences of the operations of the coalition forces. Incidents involving civilians, which have become more frequent recently, are undermining the trust of the local population in the international efforts in Afghanistan. It is essential that ISAF take measures to prevent the deaths of peaceful civilians as a result of the indiscriminate or excessive use of force, including bombings.

In that regard, we should like to emphasize once again that there is no alternative to the crucial need enshrined in the Security Council's recent resolution to comply with international humanitarian law to prevent the loss of life among the civilian population. That is an extremely important goal in the context of the long-term stabilization of Afghanistan, which was reaffirmed both by the Afghan leadership and by United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

SCO member States are convinced that effectively settling the situation in Afghanistan and resolving the serious problems now facing the country's Government will be impossible without an integrated approach on the part of the international community led by the United Nations. Nor will it be possible without giving Kabul greater independence in resolving domestic problems. First of all, conditions

must be created to allow the Afghan Government to independently provide security on the territory of the country. Of particular importance in that regard is the establishment of genuinely operational national armed forces and law enforcement agencies that are equipped with modern weapons.

The situation in Afghanistan cannot be resolved by purely military means. Durable peace and stability in Afghanistan will be impossible to achieve without the economic recovery of the country. The steps taken in the area of security must be backed by real measures aimed at the socio-economic reconstruction of Afghanistan. In that regard, we intend to further develop our diversified cooperation with Afghanistan, including by implementing projects for the socio-economic recovery and development of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

It is essential to respect the national and religious values and the centuries-long customs and traditions of the multi-ethnic and multireligious people of Afghanistan and, on that basis, bring together the belligerent forces in Afghanistan.

SCO member States support the draft resolution (A/63/L.17) on Afghanistan prepared by a large group of sponsors. We hope that its adoption by consensus will be conducive to stepping up the efforts of the international community in Afghanistan.

**Mr. Martirosyan** (Armenia) (*spoke in Russian*): It is a great honour for me to speak on behalf of the States members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), namely, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Since the overthrow of the Taliban, Afghanistan, with the help of the international community, has had considerable success in the areas of nation-building and strengthening democratic institutions in the country. At the same time, the country continues to face serious threats and challenges in the area of security. The military and political situation in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan continues to be a source of considerable concern for the international community, and in particular for the member States of the CSTO.

Taliban and Al-Qaida extremists have intensified their efforts to combat Government and international community forces in the country. They periodically

control regions of the country, where they establish parallel government structures. The activities of the terrorists are organized, with the Taliban actively employing suicide bombings and kidnapping to terrorize civilians who support the legitimate Government.

It is clear that efforts to involve so-called moderate Taliban in Government structures have not led to concrete results. Moreover, those extremists have used that opportunity to strengthen their positions in Government in several of provinces. The resulting situation raises doubt about the entire notion that it is possible to achieve anything by being friendly with extremists. We believe it is essential to isolate extremists, especially those on the sanctions list of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999).

Despite the reduction in the cultivation of poppy recorded this year and the decreased volume of opiates produced, the situation with regard to the production of, and trafficking in, drugs in the territory of Afghanistan continues to be very serious. Cooperation between drug producers and terrorist groups has intensified, especially in the south-western part of the country. We believe that only the full-fledged socio-economic reconstruction of Afghanistan and coordinated efforts by the international community to combat illegal drug trafficking will make it possible to put an end to the drug trade, which is a main source of financing for terrorists.

We are in favour of comprehensive international cooperation to achieve the goals of the final declaration of the Moscow Ministerial Conference on Drug Trafficking Routes from Afghanistan. That would entail establishing antidrug and financial security belts around Afghanistan. Of course, we must also ensure the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1735 (2006), especially with respect to individuals who support terrorist groups. Countering the large-scale production and distribution of heroin produced in Afghanistan will only be possible through the establishment of an international system to effectively control the trafficking in that illegal substance.

*Mr. Swe (Myanmar), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

The member States of the CSTO reiterate the need to fully implement Security Council resolution 1817 (2008), and we are prepared to work towards that

end. The CSTO has considerable experience in combating illegal trafficking in drugs and their precursors in Afghanistan. Operation Channel, which became a standing effort in September of this year, is one of the most successful and effective examples of CSTO cooperation in addressing the international drug trade. Participation in Operation Channel has grown every year. In addition to the member States of the CSTO, this year's Operation included several observer States, such as Azerbaijan, China, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Mongolia, Poland, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and the United States of America. For the first time, representatives from law enforcement agencies from Romania and Syria also participated, as did representatives from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Eurasian Group on Combating Money-Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism.

In the context of the Operation, effective mechanisms have been established in recent years to combat drug trafficking along northern routes from Afghanistan to Europe. As a result of the 2008 Operation, security agencies of CSTO member States seized about 11.5 tons of drugs, including 1 ton of heroin, 4.5 tons of hashish, more than 11 kilograms of cocaine and 40 kilograms of synthetic drugs.

The work to strengthen antidrug buffers should be complemented by efforts to establish financial security belts around Afghanistan. The idea is to strengthen control over transnational movements of cash flows generated by illegal drug trafficking, money laundering and other transnational criminal activities aimed, among other things, at financing terrorism.

Stabilizing the military and security situation in Afghanistan cannot be accomplished without coordinating the efforts of the international community under the auspices of the United Nations. Members of the CSTO are ready to provide support for the nation-building efforts in Afghanistan. In particular, we are prepared to provide support in the area of regional cooperation in such areas as security, economic reconstruction and combating drug trafficking.

We also think it is important to utilize the potential of Afghanistan's regional partners to implement projects to rebuild the energy and transport infrastructure of the country.

Comprehensive cooperation between Afghanistan and the countries of the region could be an important

element in finding an overall solution to the conflict. We believe that the efforts of the international community to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan and combat the terrorist and extremist threats emanating from the country will only be successful if the conditions are established to equip the Afghan Government with the independent capacity to provide security on its territory. Of particular importance in that regard is the establishment of operationally viable national armed forces and law enforcement agencies with modern equipment.

Efforts to improve the security situation in the region must be bolstered by efforts by the international community to create economic opportunities and jobs for the people of Afghanistan, especially its young people. First and foremost, stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan can be achieved by strengthening Government structures, rebuilding the economy, addressing the most acute social problems and improving the lives of the Afghan people. The members of the CSTO will continue to contribute to that effort.

**Mr. Ettalhi** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): As we mark the seventh anniversary of the fall of the backward Taliban regime in Afghanistan — an event that raised hopes among the Afghan people for the dawning of a new era that would end years of isolation and war and bring about security and prosperity to the country — the situation in that country, unfortunately, does not lead to the conclusion that many of the dreams of the Afghan people have by and large been achieved, according to the report contained in document A/63/372. This is due to numerous factors, including the increased activities of the Taliban movement and other armed groups that oppose the Afghan Government, the weakness of State institutions and the Government's inability to meet the basic socio-economic needs of the Afghan people in a State whose economy is based primarily on the production and sale of drugs.

The report also emphasizes that conditions have deteriorated radically since the fall of the Taliban in 2001 and that civilian casualties resulting from military action have risen to 1,445 during the first eight months of 2008, an increase of 39 per cent as compared to the same period in 2007. Of particular concern is the fact that 40 per cent of those deaths were the result of raids carried out by international forces and forces supporting the Afghan Government. That has taken

place despite all the domestic and international criticism, appeals and declarations calling for taking all necessary measures to protect civilians and to foster confidence among Afghan citizens, the Afghan Government and the international community. Members of the Assembly have also heard the statement by the Afghan President in that regard.

That situation leads me to the conclusion that a solution to the problem requires a comprehensive approach that is not based on air raids and force to achieve stability; instead, it requires, first and foremost, comprehensive national reconciliation among the entire Afghan people, as called for time and again by President Hâmid Karzai, and by the *loya jirga* before him. Reconciliation should include parallel development efforts to provide the socio-economic conditions that will ensure lives of dignity for the people of Afghanistan without resorting to illegal means to survive, including through drug trafficking. That would contribute to the fight against corruption and militancy while helping to restore confidence among the people and meet their basic needs. Turning a blind eye to a situation will not change it. Security, stability, peace and prosperity in Afghanistan will not be achieved without comprehensive national reconciliation that includes all Afghan groups and factions. Were the attainment of peace possible through weapons and military operations, it would have been achieved long ago in Afghanistan.

My delegation would like to express its grave concern over the crisis faced by the Afghan people as a result of drought and the rising cost of food. We fear that the worsening international financial crisis will aggravate the food crisis in Afghanistan as is the case in other developing countries. We join the Secretary-General in calling on the international community to respond positively to the appeal launched by the Vice-President of the Republic of Afghanistan and the United Nations for \$404 million to address the crisis. We hope that the implementation of the Afghan National Development Strategy will be stepped up and that the financial pledges made at the Paris Conference held last June will be honoured.

The report of the Secretary-General published last March (A/62/722) referred to cases of torture and ill treatment of detainees, including allegations of long-term arbitrary detention in facilities run by international forces. The report also indicated that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

(UNAMA) was unable to assess those allegations. His most recent report (A/63/372) makes no mention of any progress in that respect and states that the situation remains the same and that prisoners in Afghanistan are in a serious state of neglect. My delegation would like to express its grave concern about the situation of prisoners in Afghanistan. We call for respect for human rights, international law and international humanitarian law.

Despite the situations to which I have referred, there is no doubt that progress has been made in many areas — especially with regard to mine clearance, combating the drug trade, and basic infrastructure. However, despite the international commitments and efforts made, there are, nevertheless, shortcomings that we must address in order to identify their causes and sources.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize the need to provide UNAMA with the necessary resources and expertise to carry out the expanded mandate entrusted to it by Security Council resolution 1806 (2008). In that connection, we hope that donor countries will honour their pledges made at the Paris Conference. UNAMA must have the resources needed to carry out its responsibilities and mandate, especially with regard to credibly supporting and protecting the electoral process. In that connection, we would like to emphasize that the success of those elections depends both on the preparations and the participation of all groups and factions within Afghanistan.

**Mr. Haroon** (Pakistan): Today is indeed an auspicious day, as the world gathers to speak on a topic that for long has been ignored and has not received its due share of world attention. I speak of the ongoing war and travesty in Afghanistan for the past 30 to 35 years and the unimaginable pain and suffering of a nation that has largely been reported only in by-lines in the international media. I would like to explain why I feel so strongly about the situation in Afghanistan.

Pakistan has had a very long relationship with that part of the world. It is not a relationship that was borne out of the creation of Pakistan. It is a relationship with the Indian subcontinent as a whole, stretching its vast dominions under Hinduism and Buddhism, from the Volga to the Strait of Ceylon. Islam came much later. It is in that vast region, especially in Central Asia, that the people of the Indian subcontinent in fact reciprocated cultural ties with

peoples over many millennia. As such, it is not just Pakistan but the Indian subcontinent that shares not only a great relationship but also great empathy with the people of Afghanistan.

For the past 35 years, Pakistan has had a deeply rooted common destiny with Afghanistan specifically. It is a little-known fact that, if one tries to sum up the expenditures that Pakistan has had to bear in sharing with its brethren from Afghanistan, one might be amazed to know that, with more than 3 million Afghan refugees incurring food costs for more than 33 years in Pakistan at roughly 1 dollar per day per person, the sum comes to \$35 billion so far. As food is 50 per cent of people's daily expenses, one would have to add another 50 per cent for education, health and many other things, and the total sum is over \$72 billion spent in that period of time. If one takes the capital expenditure of housing and many other such things, one can practically double that figure again. Over \$150 billion has been spent over many years, but at a tremendous cost to a nation like Pakistan. Participants might be amused to know that Pakistan has a gross domestic product of about \$150 billion a year, and \$150 billion is what we spent or shared with Afghanistan over these many years.

That is why we share a common destiny. Peace and stability in the one country is a sine qua non for peace and stability in the other. We are deeply committed to a peaceful and stable environment in the region, which is necessary for prosperity and the development of our two peoples. It is with this perspective that we participate in this debate, and I must tell the Assembly that, as my mother is an Afghan, I also participate with a share of Afghan blood.

The achievement of durable peace, stability and development in Afghanistan is a shared objective of the international community. The success of international efforts in Afghanistan is critical for regional and international peace and security. A peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan is, first and foremost, in the best interest of, not only Pakistan, but the world. Let me inform the Assembly that, other than our Afghan brothers, no country or people has suffered more than Pakistan has from the direct consequences of the decades of conflict and instability in Afghanistan.

Pakistan has hosted the largest refugee population in the world since the 1980s. We have endured political

insecurity and the social, economic and environmental consequences of the protracted war in Afghanistan and the presence of vast numbers of refugees in Pakistan, which manifests itself today in the faces of the Al-Qaida and Taliban elements that cross the border into Pakistan and encourage the same on our side of the border.

Pakistan's contribution and sacrifice in the fight against terrorism are unmatched. The Assembly must know by now that over 10,000 troops have been committed by Pakistan to United Nations peacekeeping efforts and that we are the largest contributors in this field. The Assembly will be amazed to know, however, that we also have 110,000 troops on our Afghan border trying to prevent that vast war from spilling over into other parts of, not only Pakistan, but also our neighbours towards the Arabian Sea and our neighbour, India. This contribution is one that is funded totally through our own financial arrangements and coffers and one that has cost us dearly, having brought us to the brink with the severe financial difficulties we are facing today.

The backlash has been most severe in Pakistan. As a result of our role in the counter-terrorism campaign, the security environment on our side has deteriorated sharply. Thousands of innocent civilians have fallen victim to terrorism in Pakistan, and, sensitive to the sentiments of our people, the new democratic Government is striving to bring about a national consensus in order to confront and defeat the terrorists.

Our support for the international efforts in Afghanistan demands reciprocal cooperation based on goodwill, respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and mutual commitment not to allow our respective territories to be used against each other. As President Zardari has said, we cannot allow our territory and our sovereignty to be violated by these people.

Security cooperation is only one aspect of our multidimensional relationship with Afghanistan, which is now being further strengthened and encouraged by various measures that I would like to name. First of all, it was recently decided to upgrade bilateral relations with Afghanistan and to regularly hold a strategic dialogue at the Foreign Minister level.

Secondly, Pakistan hosted a meeting in October — a Jirgagai or Mini Jirga — which

unanimously adopted the Islamabad Declaration, setting forth a number of important decisions that will help increase cooperation between the two peoples of our nations.

Thirdly, the trilateral meeting in which President Karzai, Prime Minister Gilani and Prime Minister Erdogan participated on 30 October in Istanbul underlined the commitment to the continuation of the process. We greatly appreciate the positive, sincere and constructive contribution of Turkey, which is an exemplary role model in the context of efforts to promote regional cooperation.

Fourthly, the Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Economic Commission is expected to meet in Kabul in November. Preparations are under way for the third Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan to be held in Islamabad in January 2009.

Despite its own problems, Pakistan continues to help the reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. Of our total commitment of \$320 million, \$130 million have already been utilized in various socio-economic and infrastructure projects in Afghanistan. Despite shortages of wheat in Pakistan, we are providing 50,000 tons of that staple at a preferential rate to our friends and neighbours in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, we continue to host over 2 million refugees in our own country at enormous continuing cost to ourselves.

The recent report of the Secretary-General (A/63/372) presents a mixed picture and an overall deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan. The challenges are daunting but not insurmountable. They require an integrated and holistic response. There is no quick fix. It is clear that Afghanistan cannot address these challenges on its own. It needs sustained engagement and commitment from the international community. Afghanistan has made considerable progress in recent years. It is now imperative to consolidate this position and foundation.

To ensure effectiveness and success, such a strategy must be built around and pursued with full Afghan ownership. Capacity-building in all fields and at all levels has to be an essential element of this strategy. The report of the Secretary-General points out serious gaps and shortfalls in this regard that must be addressed.

Lack of security remains a major problem and concern. Security has to be addressed in all its aspects,

including the threats posed by the Taliban and Al-Qaida insurgencies, lingering warlordism, factional rivalries, criminal and other illegal armed groups, as well as the increasingly strong nexus with the drug trade. It is obvious that these problems are primarily rooted in Afghanistan and have to be addressed accordingly. Besides, security cannot be detached from the wider issues of reconciliation, improved governance, development and reconstruction. This myriad of challenges requires a collective effort based on cooperation and responsibility shared by all.

Control of the international border between Afghanistan and Pakistan is also a joint responsibility. Pakistan has proposed several steps, including capacity-building, intelligence sharing and matching military measures that can be taken by all sides to promote cooperative efforts based on shared responsibility and the avoidance of unilateral actions, in order to more effectively address the security challenge. We are determined to carry out our part. We remain committed to working together with Afghanistan and the international forces towards that objective. The Tripartite Commission continues to play an important role, and should be fully utilized in that regard.

The international community should also address, on an urgent basis, the worsening humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, which is particularly aggravated by rising food prices. In the battle for hearts and minds, the freedom from want is equally essential as the freedom from fear, which unfortunately is also being impacted negatively by the unjustified and rising toll of civilian casualties in Afghanistan.

We need to build peace in Afghanistan region by region, using incentives and peace dividends.

Genuine national reconciliation is also crucial for the success of Afghan and international efforts to bring peace and stability to the country. Winning the support of the peaceful majority is essential to isolate and break the insurgency. We support reconciliation efforts by Afghans and others as part of the comprehensive approach.

The United Nations has a central role in the international efforts in Afghanistan. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan has a well-defined mandate. We support the efforts of Special Representative Kai Eide in implementing that mandate, particularly with regard to enhancing overall

coordination for more robust and delivery-oriented support.

We agree with the observations of the Secretary-General that success will eventually depend on the full implementation of the commitments undertaken by the international community with regard to Afghanistan. His recommendation to bring about a political surge strikes the right cord. It underlines the need to look beyond the military option which, although necessary, is not the sole solution. In our view, that should be complemented by a surge in economic development and reconstruction. A huge developmental effort is required to turn the situation in Afghanistan around.

We are grateful to the delegation of Germany for once again coordinating our work on this year's draft resolution (A/63/L.17), which presents a comprehensive overview of the situation in Afghanistan. Pakistan is pleased to be a sponsor of the draft resolution, which we hope will be adopted by consensus.

Only through mutual cooperation and support can we achieve peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan and the region. Pakistan's interest in, and commitment to, that objective is clear and resolute. Along with Afghanistan, Pakistan will be the primary beneficiary of peace in Afghanistan. It will enable us to restore calm in our frontier regions. It will enable the dignified and sustainable repatriation of the remaining millions of Afghan refugees. Strategically, it will enable our two countries to serve as the hub for the interregional trade, transit and energy corridor with our Indian neighbour, which can provide a major boost to our objectives of peace and economic development. We are determined to spare no effort to achieve those objectives for the peace and prosperity of our people and our region, and specifically the people of Afghanistan.

**Mr. Al-Mutairi** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country's delegation wishes to convey to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon its gratitude for his sincere efforts to achieve success and ensure security and stability in Afghanistan. We also wish to commend the efforts of his Special Representative for Afghanistan and those of all United Nations staff in the country, who continue to carry out their work under difficult and increasingly dangerous conditions and whose bravery and commitment have been fundamental to achieving progress on the ground in Afghanistan.

We would also like to thank the representative of Germany, who introduced draft resolution A/63/L.17 concerning the situation in Afghanistan. The draft, of which my delegation is a sponsor, emphasizes the fundamental and neutral role that the United Nations plays in fostering peace and stability in Afghanistan by leading the efforts of the international community there.

Afghanistan has suffered from the scourge of several wars that have destroyed the basic infrastructure that provides water, electricity, transportation and communications services to the general public. Those wars have also severely affected the education, health and agricultural sectors, to say nothing of the enormous loss of life among Afghan civilians, foreigners and humanitarian relief workers.

Given that 2008 has been the worst year since the beginning of military operations, the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan has become dangerously worse. Acts of violence are taking place in almost every part of the country. International forces are facing a real dilemma, given that the goals of the military campaign had been to eliminate the Taliban and Al-Qaida movements, help Afghanistan complete the process of political transformation and provide support to the Government and people of Afghanistan in their effort to rebuild their country and strengthen the foundations of constitutional democracy. However, seven years after the beginning of the campaign, what has been achieved to date is far less than what was hoped for.

Nevertheless, we do not deny that there have been some achievements, in particular as regards efforts at demining, developing the national army and police forces, reforming the judiciary, expanding the rule of law and combating drugs. However, the pace of that progress continues to be slow in the light of recent developments in Afghanistan.

Having reviewed the Secretary-General's report (A/63/372) concerning the situation in Afghanistan, the State of Kuwait expresses its concern about the deteriorating situation in the country. The challenges there are far greater than what the Afghan Government can face on its own, in particular given the succession of crises that have resulted in the Government losing control over a substantial area of its national territory, thereby providing rebel groups with an opportunity to return to them, and new reports of an increase in the

influence of those groups in the southern and eastern parts of the country.

Afghanistan is suffering as a result of long-standing difficult conditions. The security situation continues to deteriorate, especially given the increase in the killing and kidnapping of innocent civilians, who have become easy targets for terrorist groups. Not long ago, in September, a suicide attack killed two medical doctors and their driver while they worked as part of a campaign to inoculate children against polio. In addition, 20 Afghan and foreign soldiers were killed last week in a suicide attack by the Taliban movement in the province of Wardek, south of the Afghan capital. In that regard, the State of Kuwait condemns the escalation of violence and suicide attacks, which have led to an increase in the number of victims among civilians, the Afghan National Police, Afghan and international aid organizations and others working in the area of humanitarian assistance.

Humanitarian needs rose to a new level in the course of the past year in Afghanistan, especially given the shortage of food due to drought and the global rise in food prices. The State of Kuwait urgently appeals to all Member States, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations to quickly provide as much assistance as they can to Afghanistan. We also call on States to adhere to the decisions of the Paris Conference of donor countries, held in June 2008 to focus on a national strategy for the development of Afghanistan.

In that connection, we wish to refer to Kuwait's contributions to the building of infrastructure in Afghanistan. The Kuwaiti Fund for Economic Development has granted a \$30 million loan for that purpose, in fulfilment of the pledge it made at the Tokyo donor conference. Of that amount, \$15 million has been allocated to rehabilitation of the Kandahar-Speen Bwaldak road and the other \$15 million to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund. The Kuwait Red Crescent Society has also provided more than \$6.5 million in assistance over the past five years, and other domestic organizations and charities have continued to provide aid.

Finally, we hope that the United Nations will continue its efforts to provide assistance to the Afghan Government with a view to the consolidation of peace and stability in Afghanistan.

**Mr. Yerrannaidu** (India): Let me begin by expressing India's appreciation for the scheduling of this discussion on a subject of great significance for us, our region and the world. I commend the efforts made by the delegation of Germany in coordinating the intergovernmental negotiations that led to this annual General Assembly draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan. We are happy to continue to be a sponsor of the draft resolution, which is traditionally adopted by consensus.

This draft resolution is arranged around a few central themes. Thus, the operative section of the text begins with issues relating to security and follows up with paragraphs on governance, human rights, the rule of law, economic and social development, counter-narcotics efforts and, finally, coordination issues. It therefore accords with our perspective on the substance of the challenge that the international community faces in Afghanistan. A similar perspective is borne out in the latest report of the Secretary-General (A/63/372) on the scale of the challenges and difficulties that beset our efforts to assist Afghanistan.

Thus, as both the draft resolution and the Secretary-General's report before us underscore, the escalation in the number of asymmetric attacks in areas cleared of the Taliban and Al-Qaida is deeply worrying. Civilians, humanitarian workers, international staff and diplomatic personnel — including our Mission in Kabul — have been attacked. While we correctly condemn the perpetrators of those savage acts, the ultimate responsibility lies with those who support, finance and empower the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other terrorist and criminal groups. Their acts of violence are callous and brutal but not mindless, since they deliberately aim to weaken the resolve of the Afghan people and the international community. In fact, however, the increase in the number of random acts of violence targeting civilians only illustrates the desperation of terrorist groups in seeking to transform strategic defeat into tactical advantage.

It is for that reason that we need to pay attention to the signals that we are sending through our actions and messages. Not only must we avoid inadvertently giving terrorists and their supporters comfort; we must also ensure that our legitimate concern at the complexity of the challenge is not mistaken for a weakening of our collective will to win this war. It is also important that we ensure that we do not accord the terrorists parity with the legitimate Government of

Afghanistan or with the international community that acts in support of it. Most of all, however, it is essential that we focus on ensuring that our message is clear and unequivocal — something that we occasionally neglect in the annual General Assembly draft resolution on Afghanistan. It is in that sense that we commend the effort made this year to sharpen the focus of the text on several key messages.

To India, the central thrust of the message that we see in this draft resolution is very clear: our support for and commitment to the central challenge in Afghanistan is unshaken. We will not be diverted from the task of helping the people of Afghanistan to bring back to their nation peace, order, stability, governance and development based on the traditionally moderate and inclusive culture of Afghanistan. We may differ individually in prioritizing and selecting strategies for achieving that goal, but there should be no mistaking the collective determination of the international community to achieve the larger goal.

From that standpoint, therefore, the road ahead is very clear. India believes that there is no alternative but to work to simultaneously implement a three-pronged strategy in Afghanistan. One element of that strategy must be security, for, without security, neither the people of Afghanistan nor our own citizens can hope to see a peace dividend after decades of strife in Afghanistan. While we accept the argument — which seems to be made more regularly of late — that Afghanistan cannot be secured through military means alone, the converse is also true: without a robust military effort, we cannot secure Afghanistan through any other means either. It is for that reason that India sees a need for much closer alignment between the consistent application of force wherever terrorist groups are present and the attainment of the political objectives of our efforts in Afghanistan.

A second element must be enhancing governance capacities in Afghanistan in order to ensure that our Afghan partners will have the capacity and the resources to chart their own course, whenever the time to do so comes. Developmental efforts are an important part of that, because any long-term strategy for stabilizing Afghanistan must be predicated upon the creation of impetus on the ground, building upon ground cleared through military measures. Here too, we must collectively ensure better coordination of our collective efforts in support of the Government of Afghanistan. To begin with, we must make a greater

effort to offset the humanitarian challenge posed by drought, climatic hardship and food scarcity.

The third element is ensuring that Afghanistan is at peace within its region and vice versa. Without that, we cannot hope to stabilize Afghanistan solely from within. This includes but is not limited to regional economic cooperation. Afghanistan's entry into the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and its membership in other regional groups are aimed at revitalizing its historical linkages with the countries of its region. The central challenge remains to ensure that programmes developed within regional mechanisms are implemented. That includes overcoming barriers to effective overland trade and transit and to the operation of mechanisms to deal with the challenges posed by drug trafficking, cross-border terrorism and so on. This is particularly true in the southern and eastern regions, where narcotics production remains an endemic problem. Unless robust security measures are followed by a larger strategy of crop substitution and securing market access for farmers, we cannot expect long-term success in countering the production of narcotics in the region.

In the context of the regional aspect, I should like to reaffirm India's national commitment to assisting Afghanistan in this complex moment in its transition. We do so not only because of the long historical and cultural ties between our peoples and the excellent relationship that our two countries enjoy, but also because history has shown us that regional prosperity, security and progress are indivisible. Therefore, our consistent effort has been to design our assistance programmes in a manner that focuses upon bringing development benefits both to the local level and to the larger, national level.

Not only has India recently announced an increase in its commitment to Afghanistan, amounting to \$1.2 billion, but we are also pleased to have completed the construction of the Zaranj-Delaram highway in western Afghanistan. It is one of three major infrastructure projects India is undertaking in Afghanistan, the others being a large hydroelectric project and a large power-transmission project. Another project of considerable symbolic value for us is the construction of a parliament building in Afghanistan. We hope to begin construction later this month.

In conclusion, I should like to come back to the message of our draft resolution. For India, it is

important that the clarity of our message not be diluted by adding excessive expectations based on efforts that ultimately tend to replicate our national socio-economic models in an inappropriate setting. We need to remind ourselves that we cannot realistically resolve all of Afghanistan's problems at once. Given the challenge that faced us a little over seven years ago, we should recognize that progress will continue, but sector by sector and piece by piece.

Patience and perseverance are essential for the long-term success of our investment, alongside a willingness to listen to those whom we seek to help. It is for that reason that an Afghan-led process of prioritization of tasks remains essential.

**Mr. Okuda** (Japan): Japan welcomes this opportunity to address the General Assembly on the situation in Afghanistan.

We are pleased to be a sponsor of the draft resolution before us (A/63/L.17). Given the challenging situation Afghanistan faces today, it is of particular importance to demonstrate the unity of the international community in supporting Afghanistan by adopting the draft resolution by consensus. Appreciation is also due to our colleagues of the German delegation, who led the consultations on the draft resolution.

We all know that the situation in the country is difficult, and that those who oppose the democratic Government are trying to plant fear and doubt in the minds of the Afghan people, but let me highlight the progress that Afghanistan has achieved in the past seven years.

The economy has grown steadily, with an annual growth rate of approximately 10 per cent over the past five years. In five years, the number of students enrolled in school has soared from less than 1 million in 2001 to more than 5.6 million. Children's access to health services has significantly improved. Six million children have received polio vaccinations to date. Such progress could not have been achieved without the resolve of the Government and people of Afghanistan, with the assistance of the international community.

We should not and will not give in to attempts to undermine that progress. We, the international community, will continue to firmly stand by Afghanistan in its endeavours for stability and prosperity.

At the same time, we must squarely face the challenges on the ground. Security is the foremost concern, as candidly described in the most recent report of the Secretary-General (A/63/372). We are pleased to note that the capacity of the Afghan National Army has been enhanced, and congratulate it on taking over responsibility for the security of Kabul. We also pay tribute to the countries participating in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the Operation Enduring Freedom coalition for their dedication in the fight against terrorism.

It is also true that the problems cannot be solved by military means alone. We have advocated the necessity of a holistic approach to addressing the various challenges Afghanistan faces. The goals of security, governance and development cannot be achieved independently of each other.

At the centre of international efforts in the country is the United Nations. We support the implementation of UNAMA's priorities, and in that connection, Japan also supports the strengthening of the Mission's structure so that it can better meet the expectations of the Afghan people and the world.

We commend Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for his dedication in leading the Mission. Mr. Eide provided a useful outline of his goals for the next six months in his most recent briefing to the Security Council. We thank him for that and will support him in achieving those goals.

For its part, Japan has been fully committed to contributing to the nation-building of the country. In the area of assistance for reconstruction, for example, Japan has disbursed its pledged contribution of \$1.45 billion. We were glad to see the completion of the construction of the Kabul International Airport Terminal Building, welcomed by the Afghan people at a ceremony held just last week. Japan made an additional pledge of \$550 million at the Paris Conference, bringing its total pledged assistance to \$2 billion.

On the security side, Japan is pleased to have been the lead country in the process of disbanding illegally armed groups, which we strongly believe has made a significant difference in improving the security situation. We have also been participating in the fight against terrorism by replenishing the fleet of the

Operation Enduring Freedom coalition in the Indian Ocean.

Even with the continued commitment of the international community, much rests on the shoulders of the Afghan Government. We take the recent reshuffle of the cabinet as a demonstration of President Karzai's resolve to address the issues more effectively.

While supporting the Government's efforts to promote national reconciliation, we hope that issues such as governance, corruption, reform of the police force and the Ministry of the Interior, and counter-narcotics will be effectively dealt with in a strengthened Government.

The most important events ahead in the political calendar are the elections in 2009 and 2010. Voter registration has begun smoothly and that is a good launching pad for the holding of legitimate elections. Thorough preparations, including the successful completion of voter registration, are necessary so that the Government's commitment to holding the elections as planned will be carried out.

The importance of the regional dimension cannot be overemphasized. We welcome the recent active dialogues among Afghanistan and neighbouring countries. We also welcome the recent fruitful visit of the Foreign Minister of Afghanistan to Pakistan, as well as the trilateral meeting of leaders of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkey.

Regarding our own efforts in that area, Japan appreciates the encouragement in the General Assembly draft resolution for the Group of Eight's initiatives. We hope that the implementation of the initiatives will contribute to regional efforts to stabilize and develop the border area.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate Japan's unwavering commitment to fulfilling its role for the future of Afghanistan. Afghanistan will remain one of our focuses at the United Nations.

**Mr. Al Habib** (Islamic Republic of Iran): I wish to extend our thanks to the Secretary-General for his latest report on the situation in Afghanistan (A/63/372). We also thank him and his Special Representative, as well as the personnel of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, for their steadfast commitment to and unwavering support for peace, stability and development in Afghanistan.

In the past several years, many commendable efforts have been made by the people and the Government of Afghanistan in rebuilding their country, taking their destiny into their own hands, establishing democratic institutions and developing a vibrant political system, and, indeed, fighting terrorism and extremism in the country.

Also, much has been accomplished in areas such as economic growth, education, health, infrastructure-building, rural development and capacity-building. The Afghan people and Government deserve our collective admiration for all the achievements they have made thus far. They also need the continued support of all of us while they move forward in their journey towards a stable, secure and prosperous Afghanistan.

Despite all the accomplishments however, much remains to be done and serious challenges are yet to be tackled. As the report at hand indicates, we are today facing a mixed picture in Afghanistan. Afghanistan seems to be at a crossroads again. Given the threats that the presence of extremist and terrorists in Afghanistan has posed to international peace and security in the past — a threat that still exists — the whole world has no doubt that it has a vital interest in a stable, secure and prosperous Afghanistan and in an Afghanistan free from terrorism and extremism.

Extremists and terrorists will spare no effort to explore and misuse any signs or missteps by some that could in any way be misinterpreted as a weakening of the international community's resolve to help Afghanistan in its fight against terrorism and extremism. Unfortunately, certain countries have made statements or taken steps that give rise to such concerns on the part of the Afghan people and Government, as well as the world community. That is a matter of grave concern and may only bring a new phase of extremism to the region.

In our view, the insecurity in Afghanistan can be best addressed by strengthening the autonomy and integrity of the Afghan national security forces and by expediting full national ownership by Afghans of the security of their country. Moreover, capacity-building, training, education, the development of important sectors and ensuring that ordinary Afghans feel the results of the help and support of the international community in their day-to-day lives could help to improve the overall situation in Afghanistan.

Unfortunately, the cultivation and production of and traffic in narcotic drugs in Afghanistan continue unabated. They not only affect the security and development of Afghanistan, but pose serious threats to the region and the world at large. We have noted and welcome the efforts made by the Afghan Government in countering that menace, yet more resolute endeavours need to be made both by Afghanistan and the international community if the world is to effectively rid itself of that daunting challenge.

As various reports by relevant United Nations bodies and agencies attest, throughout the past three decades the Islamic Republic of Iran has fought a deadly and costly war against drug traffickers — a war that has cost our nation the lives of about 4,000 of its great and brave law-enforcement personnel, while another 12,000 have been maimed. We expect more support and determination on the part of the international community as we continue that fight with utmost seriousness.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has also been actively participating in the reconstruction process of Afghanistan. Road and railroad construction, manpower training, electricity projects and humanitarian services are but a few of the important contributions we have made in that regard. Furthermore, we have shouldered a huge burden during the past three decades by hosting millions of our Afghan brothers and sisters. Throughout all those years, those Afghan nationals have been enjoying educational and welfare facilities in Iran and have benefited from the same subsidies that our own people enjoy. Our country is today hosting about 2 million Afghan nationals, half of whom are living in our country illegally. We expect more assistance and efforts from the international community in the process of helping Afghan nationals to return to their home country in a more timely manner.

I wish to conclude by stressing that, as in the past several years, the Afghan people and Government will always find us at their side, offering our sincere help and support as they continue their difficult but valuable and necessary journey towards peace, stability and prosperity.

I also wish to thank the delegation of Germany for its efforts in the preparation of and negotiating process on the draft resolution on Afghanistan (A/63/L.17).

**Mr. Khalilzad** (United States of America): The United States is pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution (A/63/L.17) reaffirming the solidarity of the international community with Afghanistan. We thank the German delegation for its hard work in ensuring that the resolution receive the broadest possible support. The draft resolution underscores the leading role that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is playing as the central coordinator for all civilian international assistance and for ensuring that such assistance is coordinated with the Afghans and with the military efforts.

The United States commends the work of Special Representative Kai Eide and the UNAMA staff. We call on Member States to join us in supporting a surge in UNAMA's capabilities. We urge the Secretariat and Member States to do everything in their power to give Mr. Eide the support and resources that he needs to carry out his very important mission. We must find ways to allow him to hire the people he needs and get them on board immediately, not months from now. Mr. Eide, in turn, needs to use those capabilities and the promising relationships he has built with the Afghans and with the international community to develop targets, plans and timelines for achieving each of the major tasks of his mandate.

The United States is gravely concerned about the humanitarian conditions in Afghanistan. The situation is worsening and many lives are in jeopardy, both from possible food shortages and from extreme cold weather. The United States is the largest donor to Afghanistan, financially and in kind. We are prepared to do more. We urge Member States to respond to Afghan Government and United Nations appeals to avoid a worsening humanitarian situation this winter. Preparations for winter should aim at assisting needy Afghans in dealing with food shortages and cold weather.

The security situation in Afghanistan has become more challenging as the number of anti-Government incidents have increased and the Taliban has continued to wage deadly attacks on Afghan security forces, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the civilian population. The Afghan people face an increasingly vicious campaign of violence and intimidation by Al-Qaida and extremist Taliban. We appreciate the sacrifices so many countries are making to help Afghanistan. Just yesterday, two Spanish ISAF

soldiers were reportedly killed in a suicide attack in Herat province.

Despite the security challenges, the United States believes that success can be achieved in Afghanistan. Success requires that the Government in Afghanistan implement its National Development Strategy, making tough decisions and implementing agreed policies specifically in the areas of local governance, combating corruption, enforcing the rule of law, achieving economic development, and pursuing robust counter-narcotics and reform of the police forces.

We hope that the recent changes in the Government can assist with making progress with regard to those goals. We welcome and, indeed, believe it crucial that Afghan security forces take increasing responsibility for protecting the Afghan people as their capabilities grow and as conditions warrant.

President Karzai has committed his Government to holding elections in 2009. That is very important. We welcome UNAMA's efforts to support the Afghan Government in preparing for the elections. Last Wednesday, the second phase of the voter registration got under way. It is imperative that the international community redouble its efforts to ensure credible elections. We call on the Afghan Government to maintain its commitment to carrying out the elections as scheduled in order to further instil a culture of representative, democratic Government in the country and to sustain international support.

For Afghanistan's success, I would like to underscore the importance of the role of the country's neighbours. The recent election of a new Government in Pakistan provides an opportunity for increased cooperation between the two countries against terrorists and extremists who threaten Afghanistan, Pakistan and, indeed, the world. The agenda for regional cooperation is clear: no sanctuaries for hostile forces, no use of extremists and terrorists to advance national interests, intelligence-sharing, precluding regional geopolitical rivalry, encouraging reconciliation, and integrating Afghanistan into regional institutions and the regional economy. Progress on those fronts is crucial to Afghanistan's stability and development. Both the Afghan and the Pakistani Governments need international support to resist extremists and terrorists.

The United States deeply regrets the accidental loss of civilian lives, and we do not take that issue

lightly. We share the Secretary-General's grave concern over the issue of civilian casualties. I want to assure Member States that we will do everything in our power to ensure that ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom take every precaution to prevent civilian casualties. We have intensified our efforts with the Government of Afghanistan to improve coordination and communication in operations to prevent future incidents, and our military's Central Command has issued guidance to United States forces to continue to take steps to prevent civilian casualties and to acknowledge them when they occur.

At the same time, we should not lose sight of the fundamental cause of this increase in casualties, clearly spelled out in the Secretary-General's recent report (A/63/372). The Taliban and other anti-Government elements are waging a systematic campaign of violence and intimidation against civilians. They deliberately target civilians and use them as shields and, as the report points out, the Taliban is increasingly resorting to asymmetric attacks on population centres, aid-related targets and non-governmental organizations.

Last June, the international community endorsed the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, and there was an unprecedented level of pledges. Those are clear signs of our determination to help Afghans succeed. As Afghans do their part, donors must also follow through on their commitments.

In closing, it is clear that Afghanistan faces significant difficulties and challenges. Those challenges should serve to reaffirm and renew commitment to Afghanistan's success — by making the necessary changes and adjustments — on the part of Afghanistan and the international community. The United States is committed to doing so and remains firmly committed to Afghanistan's success. Afghanistan's success is the world's success.

**Mr. Wetland** (Norway): Norway welcomes today's draft resolution on Afghanistan (A/63/L.17). The broad support it enjoys sends an important message that we are united and committed to helping Afghanistan build a democratic country and to helping heal the wounds inflicted by decades of war and terror.

At the Paris Conference in June, a great number of us pledged to renew our partnership with Afghanistan, and the Afghan Government promised to step up its fight against corruption and narcotics. On that occasion, Norway reaffirmed its long-term

commitment by pledging €500 million for the time period covered by the Afghanistan National Development Strategy.

How can we here at the United Nations make an immediate difference, now and for the future? I would answer by focusing on three particular issues.

The first is the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). A grave responsibility has been placed on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and on Special Representative Kai Eide. They have been called upon to lead the international civilian effort in Afghanistan. At Paris, we pledged substantial resources to really assist the Afghan Government. Now, expectations are high. The people of Afghanistan are waiting to see the results that would justify our rhetoric in Paris.

But many, alas, have yet to experience the benefits of development or to see hope on the horizon. True, we see important improvements, not least with regard to school enrolment, for girls in particular but also for boys, and with respect to public health. But other sectors are lagging behind, and development is also uneven between the regions. We must let ourselves be coordinated by UNAMA, and we must ensure that UNAMA and Kai Eide have the necessary resources and sufficient qualified personnel to meet those expectations.

That may require some practical adaptation of rules and regulations regarding budgets and staffing. The General Assembly will consider UNAMA's budget later next month, and we urge all Member States to provide UNAMA with the necessary resources to carry out its strengthened mandate. We also urge the Secretariat to cut red tape and to speed up the process of putting qualified people in the field.

Secondly, we need to focus on the humanitarian situation. The people of Afghanistan are facing a harsh winter. The consequences of the global food crisis are being felt, and are compounded by drought. That is why we must assist the Government of Afghanistan in alleviating the serious humanitarian situation. Norway has recently increased its humanitarian support significantly, also in relation to facilitating the establishment of the new United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) office in Kabul. We take it, moreover, that OCHA will quickly assume its responsibility for humanitarian coordination, in close cooperation with UNAMA.

Thirdly, we must focus on the elections. The United Nations Development Programme is advising the Afghan Government on how to register voters and inform them about the election, and it is doing so with great skill and creativity. Of the more than 820,000 voters registered in the first phase of the process, women make up 38 per cent, which is a high figure, given that those initial regions are the most difficult ones to access. The broad participation of women is heartening and bodes well for the election. In order to consolidate Afghan democracy, it is vital that the elections take place according to plan in September 2009 and in 2010. Norway has committed resources to the registration process, and we will also support the holding of elections. Consolidating democracy also requires improving the rule of law and respect for human rights. The recent changes in the Afghan Government — and there was one even today — demonstrate renewed commitment to fighting corruption and improving security.

Let me conclude by paying my respects to the men and women on the ground and to those who paid with their lives so that others may live. We owe it to them and to millions of others to ensure that the Taliban will never again be able to terrorize the Afghan people.

**Mr. Hill** (Australia): Australia welcomes the opportunity to endorse draft resolution A/63/L.17, on Afghanistan, and to reaffirm our commitment to continuing international efforts to help build a more secure and stable Afghan State. We do so against the background of continuing sacrifice on the part of the Afghan people and international forces, and today we pay tribute in particular to the Spanish soldiers who lost their lives last weekend.

On a brighter note, we have seen important steps taken this year, most particularly the renewed commitments and comprehensive political-military plan adopted by International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) partners at the NATO summit in Bucharest in April and the important outcomes of the Afghanistan Review Conference in Paris in June. We take this opportunity to commend again the efforts of France, Afghanistan and the United Nations to bring the Review Conference together and to launch the Afghanistan National Development Strategy. We note that around 80 countries participated in the Conference, pledging over \$20 billion to the Development Strategy, and that the Strategy provides a

sound framework for planning for Afghanistan's national development needs over the next five years.

But we must be realistic about the enormous challenges facing Afghanistan and its international partners and recognize the fact that, without basic security, much of what is needed, such as building the Afghan people's capacity to manage their own affairs and creating conditions for economic and social development, will not be realized.

There is no question that the Taliban-led insurgency remains a serious threat to sustained progress and to the Afghan people. It is determined to prevail not on the battlefield, but by sapping the resolve and public support of Afghanistan and its friends for our sacrifices through fear and intimidation of the Afghan civilian population.

We also know of the insurgents' tactics to manipulate and disseminate information to discredit and our efforts. Australia, like others, continues to deeply regret civilian casualties that arise from the actions of international forces, but we have strict rules of engagement to minimize those risks and processes to review and ensure that our actions comply with those rules. Our enemies, in contrast, have no moral issue with using civilians as shields or instruments of terror.

The international community clearly has a responsibility to the Afghan people, as recognized by numerous United Nations resolutions, to prevent the return to rule of the violent ideology that bred hatred, brutalized women and fostered only extreme poverty and repression of basic human rights. Equally important, we all have a responsibility to our own people to prevent the Taliban-led insurgency from re-establishing safe havens for terrorist groups that seek to export violence across the globe.

Australia is proud to be part of the group of approximately 40 countries contributing forces to assist Afghans in fighting the Taliban-led insurgency and international terrorists, including Al-Qaida. Those terrorists were behind attacks as far apart as New York and Indonesia, including the attacks in Bali that killed 202 people, including many of my countrymen and countrywomen.

Australia is committed. With 1,100 troops, we are the largest non-NATO contributor to ISAF. We have also committed over \$600 million in development assistance to Afghanistan since 2001. We will subject

our commitment to annual review against the mission we have set for ourselves. We welcome the fact that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General has set out before the Security Council some achievable goals for UNAMA over the next six months. We support UNAMA and look forward to being constructive in consideration of its budget in the Fifth Committee for additional resources to allow it to fulfil its mandate, particularly in relation to support for election preparations.

Australia's stabilization and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan are concentrated in Oruzgan province in the South of the country, where we are working in partnership with the Afghan Government and the Netherlands, which we praise for their partnership. Our reconstruction task force has built schools, provided basic training in trades such as carpentry, and has rebuilt bridges and irrigation systems. While positive, those are only small steps. Oruzgan demonstrates the critical need for a coherent and integrated military and civilian strategy that provides the basis to secure and sustain progress. And that is equally true in other provinces of the country.

We know that there needs to be much greater focus on building Afghanistan's capacity to take responsibility for security, which will enable important reconstruction and development activity to take place. I am pleased to state that Australia's first operational mentor and liaison team is currently establishing itself in the province and will soon be actively training and mentoring Afghan military units.

There also needs to be greater focus on more effective coordination of civilian efforts in relief, rebuilding and governance activity within a comprehensive political-military strategy. And we believe that the United Nations has a strong role to play in pursuing that objective.

We very much value the work and efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the UNAMA team, in particular in their lead role in coordinating international donor activity in support of the Afghan Government. We know the difficult circumstances in which they work. We are pleased that a special allowance was introduced for them. Australia is committed to working with the Secretariat and other Member States to ensure that UNAMA is capable of fulfilling the demanding role we have set it.

We also reiterate our support for President Karzai and Afghan parties committed to strengthening Afghanistan's institutions. The next two years will see the crucial tests of further elections and we call on all to assist in ensuring that those elections are conducted in a secure, free and fair fashion. We can be certain that those utterly opposed to the Afghan people making up their own minds will do all they can to disrupt the elections. They must be prevented from doing so.

Australia also takes this opportunity to praise the new Government of Pakistan for its recent efforts to improve relations with the Afghan Government. The Taliban poses a common threat and both countries must work together to address it. We also note the valuable and constructive role that Afghanistan's other neighbours can play to promote and support Afghan stability, in particular in areas such as border security, trafficking and counter-narcotics.

The challenges ahead are substantial, but collectively we can meet them. To do so will require our continued commitment and cooperation. We support the draft resolution and we are proud to have co-sponsored it.

**Mr. McNee (Canada):** At the outset, I would like to express the Canadian Government's deep condolences regarding the Spanish soldiers who gave their lives in Afghanistan this weekend.

Canada welcomes today's draft resolution (A/63/L.17) and we would like to thank the German delegation for its excellent work in facilitating negotiations on it. Canada is proud to have contributed to efforts to draft the draft resolution. We are pleased to co-sponsor its passage today. Its adoption will be a testament to the ongoing strength of the partnership between the international community and Government of Afghanistan. It also affirms our collective commitment to a safe, secure and stable Afghanistan.

Canada acknowledges the strengthened leadership the United Nations has provided this past year, with a sharpened mandate for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to lead the coordination of international efforts and the appointment of Kai Eide as Special Representative of the Secretary-General. Initial progress has already been made. Canada welcomes the efforts of the UNAMA and the Government of Afghanistan to restructure the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board to make it a more efficient and more decisive instrument.

UNAMA's role in Afghanistan is, after all, to shape and focus our collective efforts. However, the United Nations is not a solitary actor — it is only as empowered as Member States allow it to be. Member States must ensure that it has the financial resources and the political support required to do its job.

The international community has much to learn from the Afghan people who continue to demonstrate remarkable resilience and determination. In the face of a fierce insurgency, the Afghan National Army continues to grow in numbers, capacity and professionalism.

With the support of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), this Afghan institution is now able to lead a growing number of operations — something unthinkable just a year ago. And just over two months ago, Afghan security forces assumed lead security responsibility for Kabul from ISAF — a proud and significant achievement.

Canada welcomes Afghanistan's ratification of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption in August of this year, meeting one of the benchmarks of the Afghanistan Compact. While much still needs to be done, Canada is also encouraged by the creation in June of this year of the High Office for Oversight for the implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy.

Canada remains committed to working with Afghans and the international community to help rebuild Afghanistan. This past year, Canada further increased its development commitment, pledging an additional \$600 million. This brings Canada's total assistance contribution to \$1.9 billion over a ten-year period. This is, of course, in addition to our continued military engagement in Kandahar Province.

Canada has also announced its commitment to the repair of the Dahla Dam and its irrigation system in Kandahar Province. Once completed, this dam will provide a secure irrigation water supply to the majority of the people of Kandahar Province, as well as create the potential to revitalize agriculture in the province and provide thousands of much needed jobs to Kandaharis.

Canada's polio eradication programme will see the immunization of an estimated 7 million children across Afghanistan.

Canada is also committed to increasing development programming in Kandahar. At the same time, at least half of Canadian funding will be dedicated to national level initiatives, such as strengthening vital national institutions, rebuilding the Afghan National Police, justice and corrections systems.

Canada is committed to supporting free, fair, secure, Afghan-led elections in 2009 and 2010 and echoes the resolution's call to the international community to continue to provide sustained support and financial assistance.

With voter registration currently underway, the Afghan people are commencing their second electoral process in recent times. This is a crucial step in the establishment of democracy in Afghanistan.

*(spoke in French)*

As the Secretary-General noted in his September report on the situation in Afghanistan (A/63/372), Afghanistan's neighbours and regional partners play a crucial role in promoting Afghanistan's development and stability. Canada therefore welcomes the resolution's emphasis on regional cooperation as an effective means to promote security and development. Canada has been working to build cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan, facilitating technical discussions among border management officials. We are also very supportive of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Joint Peace Jirga process and congratulate the two countries on the recent meeting of the Jirgagai.

The progress we have seen must not blind us to the harsh reality that these gains are precarious. Security has deteriorated in some parts of Afghanistan adversely affecting our governance and development efforts and ambitions. Rising global food prices have not spared Afghanistan, while drought and a failed harvest are compounding food shortages across the country.

These are the immediate and pressing concerns of Afghans. For this reason, Canada has named humanitarian relief among its priorities. In doing so, we are making clear to the Afghan people that the international community remains committed to supporting them. But it is action and change, not words, that will convince them.

**Ms. Banks** (New Zealand): New Zealand welcomes progress made in Afghanistan since this time

last year and is pleased once again to be a sponsor of draft resolution A/63/L.17, prepared and introduced by Germany.

We congratulate the Government of Afghanistan on its efforts to improve the situation, including in the areas of security, drug control, justice sector reform, gender equality and local governance. We welcome Afghanistan's ratification of the United Nations Convention against Corruption and encourage the Government to continue to fight corruption, which it has acknowledged as an impediment to progress in Afghanistan.

Although there has been positive progress in Afghanistan, the overall situation remains of major concern with ongoing insurgent attacks and a continued high level of opium production. New Zealand condemns the insurgent attacks which often jeopardize the lives of innocent civilians.

These extreme security challenges must not, however, be allowed to justify continuing infringements of fundamental human rights, including access to justice, the right to due process and freedom of expression.

We thank Afghanistan's neighbours for their positive efforts to help improve the situation in Afghanistan. We encourage them to continue to coordinate their efforts with those of the rest of the international community to stabilize Afghanistan. Otherwise, these efforts at stabilization will be undermined by cross-border activities.

The NATO summit in Bucharest earlier in the year reviewed the situation in Afghanistan and put forward a plan aimed primarily at improving the security situation. At the summit, New Zealand Prime Minister, Helen Clark, highlighted the importance of a comprehensive, multipronged approach covering security, governance and development interventions, with a rebalancing of effort towards governance and development. The approach also emphasizes reconciliation.

The international community needs to increase non-military assistance. The Paris Conference outcomes addressed development priorities articulated in the new Afghanistan National Development Strategy.

We encourage all nations to implement the commitments they have made to improve the

circumstances in Afghanistan. It is essential that the required resources are made available so that the Afghanistan that Ambassador Tanin spoke about this morning can become a reality — an Afghanistan where people can rebuild their lives in peace.

New Zealand welcomes the improved coordinating role of the United Nations through the strengthening of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. That will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the international community's assistance. We fully support the work of Special Representative Kai Eide, and we note the progress that he has made within a short period of time.

New Zealand looks forward to the holding of free and fair elections in 2009 and 2010 as building blocks for democracy in Afghanistan. Since 2001, New Zealand has made a substantial commitment to the international effort to restore peace and security in Afghanistan. Our Provincial Reconstruction Team in Bamyan province is the centrepiece of that commitment.

In closing, I should like to acknowledge the efforts and sacrifices made by all those nations that are working in partnership with the Government of Afghanistan and to join others in expressing sympathy on the loss of the lives of two Spanish soldiers over the weekend.

**Mr. Towpik** (Poland): At the outset, I would like to associate myself with the statement delivered by the representative of France on behalf of the European Union. Permit me to make a few additional comments from the Polish perspective on this important and vital issue for the international community.

I wish to begin by thanking the delegation of Germany for its significant effort in facilitating the consultation process that resulted in the draft resolution before us. In addition, the annual debate on Afghanistan is the best opportunity to underline the prominent role that the United Nations plays in the process of that country's stabilization and reconstruction. The coordinating role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the activities undertaken by Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, enjoy our full support and respect. Let me also convey our sincere condolences to our Spanish friends. We share their grief on the loss of the lives of the Spanish soldiers in Afghanistan.

Poland strongly believes that the engagement of the international community in Afghanistan should and would facilitate the creation of conditions in which the Afghan authorities would be able to take full responsibility for the security, stability and development of their country. That is the main purpose of our presence in the country. Bearing that in mind, Poland also decided to increase its engagement in the stabilization and reconstruction process within the International Security Assistance Force from 100 troops in 2006 to 1,600 troops at present. Moreover, in October this year, Poland took over the responsibility for the security situation throughout Ghazni province.

In our view, the most important challenges to the international community in Afghanistan are the following. First is the stabilization of the security situation. We still have major concerns related to the security situation in Afghanistan, and we continue to do our utmost to address them. The creation of conditions conducive to the development of a prosperous country with effective, well-functioning and transparent Government structures is the best strategy for stabilizing Afghanistan. For that reason, Poland contributes actively to the development of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan. We plan to gradually increase our civilian engagement in the activities of the PRT in Ghazni province.

Secondly, we must address the humanitarian situation. We cannot ignore the increase in the number of the serious humanitarian challenges ahead of us or the need for the international community and donors to face them in order to meet their commitments in that field. Moreover, in the context of worrisome news concerning the social and living standards of the Afghan population, we must focus on ways to effectively distribute humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian capacity must be enhanced, especially in the light of the threat posed by the food crisis. Since 2002, the Polish Government has been actively involved in providing humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people, and in 2004 Afghanistan was included on Poland's list of priorities in the Asian region in the field of humanitarian aid. In 2008, Polish official development assistance to Afghanistan amounted to more than \$3 million.

Thirdly, we need better coordination of activities, especially among UNAMA, ISAF, the European Union

Police Mission in Afghanistan and other international actors involved in Afghanistan.

Fourthly and finally, let me stress the importance of regional cooperation. There is an urgent need to develop such cooperation in order to stabilize Afghanistan. In that context, I would like to welcome and commend the improved relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The international community should continuously support both countries in their efforts to combat extremism and terrorism. The efforts of the Tripartite Commission — including ISAF, Afghanistan and Pakistan — in the Afghani-Pakistani border zone should contribute more substantially to the achievement of that goal.

Afghanistan will need our significant and continuous support in its reconstruction and stabilization efforts for some years to come. At the same time, we should try to develop programmes and initiatives that, in a long-term perspective, would enable the Afghan people to take full responsibility for the peaceful and prosperous development of their country and their region.

**Mr. Ali** (Malaysia): First of all, let me express my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on the situation in Afghanistan as contained in document A/63/372. The report provides useful observations on efforts to bring peace, security and stability to Afghanistan. We would also like to express our appreciation to Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for his valuable work and to the members of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their dedication in carrying out their responsibilities despite a difficult and challenging situation.

We also congratulate the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on the successful launching of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy at the Paris Conference held on 12 June 2008, which, together with the pledged support of the international community at the Conference, provide the road map and the means for national efforts to bring long-term security and prosperity to Afghanistan.

My delegation takes note of the Secretary-General's overall assessment that Afghanistan is facing an ever-more-challenging situation. We note with deep concern the marked deterioration of the security situation resulting from insurgent attacks that are

spreading into more sensitive areas and the deployment of asymmetrical tactics in those attacks. The increasing violence is a matter of concern for all, as security is the major factor making it possible to carry out urgently needed humanitarian relief work and efforts to achieve long-term success in the reconstruction and socio-economic development of the country. The actions by the insurgents will definitely retard the Government's efforts to bring much needed development to those areas.

In a similar vein, we are deeply concerned with the high number of civilian casualties, which is in no way acceptable. In the first eight months of 2008 alone, we note that UNAMA recorded 1,445 civilian deaths, which represents a 39 per cent increase over the same period last year. We condemn the cowardly terrorist acts perpetrated by the insurgents and other extremist groups that wilfully target civilian populations, including humanitarian aid workers.

We are equally concerned at the civilian casualties resulting from military actions by pro-Government forces. We note from the report that during the first eight-month period of 2008, 393 deaths, or 27 per cent of civilian deaths, were attributed to air strikes by pro-Government forces. We share the Secretary-General's view that civilians should be protected at all times from any form of danger, particularly from grave injury or death, not only from terrorist acts and insurgency, but also from the unintended consequences of pro-Government military operations. We therefore call on and urge all parties to ensure the protection of these civilians, as required under international humanitarian and human rights laws. We also call on the relevant authorities to continually review their rules of engagement and procedures in this regard in order to ensure the protection of civilian lives.

Another issue of concern is the narcotics situation in Afghanistan, in view of the nexus between the drug trade and the activities of the insurgents and criminal groups that finance terrorism and corruption. My delegation is encouraged by the reported albeit modest decrease in both poppy cultivation area and opium production. We note that opium production is now confined to only seven provinces where the insurgents remain very active, out of a total of 34 provinces where such production took place previously.

With regard to counter-narcotics efforts, we recognize the monumental task that remains for Afghanistan if it is to eradicate the drug trade, in view of the insurgency and the task of providing alternative livelihoods to poppy growers. In addition, counter-narcotics officials and enforcers are constantly threatened and intimidated by corrupt officials and traffickers.

From the report, we learn that some 77 members of the eradication force were killed this year, a six-fold increase over the casualties from last year. While efforts appear to be being taken at the country level to further ensure success in the counter-narcotic efforts in Afghanistan, the international community also needs to curtail the demand side of the opium trade in Afghanistan, including by reinvigorating international efforts to clamp down on the drug route going out of Afghanistan. The adoption of Security Council resolution 1817 (2008) to, inter alia, curtail the diversion and trafficking of precursors from exporting countries to Afghanistan and neighbouring countries should, if implemented thoroughly, contribute towards greater success in counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan.

Security challenges in Afghanistan are as much the cause as well as the result of the socio-political situation in the country. The resolution of the situation will require an integrated and concerted civilian and military approach. Military actions alone are insufficient when it comes to addressing the root causes of the problem. At the same time, the Government should also work to improve its delivery systems, the quality of its governance and its respect for human rights in order to foster credibility and galvanize support for itself and its initiatives. Furthermore, an all-inclusive national reconciliation process is needed to avoid the marginalization of any groups. My delegation is encouraged by the efforts undertaken by the Afghan Government in this direction.

For far too long now, Afghanistan has been saddled with many daunting challenges that have placed its people in a very precarious situation. The time should come soon for Afghanistan to be raised out of this hardship, which will only be possible if there is continued support and assistance from the international community. For Malaysia's part, we reiterate our commitment to cooperate and work closely with Afghanistan and, where appropriate, with other

members of the international community. We will continue to extend assistance to Afghanistan under the Malaysian technical cooperation programme to develop the much needed human capital in the various fields of Afghanistan's development.

**Mr. İlkin** (Turkey): Turkey aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of France on behalf of the European Union. However, given the importance we attach to the situation in Afghanistan, I would like to make a few additional remarks in my national capacity.

At the outset, allow me to express our satisfaction with the draft resolution that the General Assembly intends to adopt this afternoon (A/63/L.17). We see this draft resolution as a balanced document that reflects both the progress made and the challenges remaining in Afghanistan. It also builds upon and complements the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/372), which depicts the situation in a realistic manner and offers helpful suggestions for the road ahead. We are therefore proud to sponsor the draft resolution, and we thank Germany for facilitating a broad consensus around it.

First of all, we are as committed as ever to helping Afghanistan build a secure, stable and prosperous country. Turkey shares unique ties with Afghanistan, so our commitment to see this country thrive and prosper is indeed deep-rooted. On the other hand, as far as our concrete contributions to reconstruction efforts go, I kindly refer participants to the note annexed to the text of my speech, which includes the inventory of our security and development assistance.

Secondly, we are not at all pessimistic about the prospects in Afghanistan. Despite continuing challenges, mainly in the security, counter-narcotics and governance fields, we are also aware of the progress being made on many fronts. The statement made by the representative of the European Union touched upon many of these heartening achievements, and I would like to emphasize them once again.

Accordingly, we urge everyone concerned not to be discouraged by some temporary setbacks, which are only inevitable in a war-torn country like Afghanistan. We must always bear in mind the ultimate objective that led us into Afghanistan in the first place. Of course, the responsibility to achieve this ultimate objective rests, first and foremost, on the shoulders of

the Afghan people and their Government. And, indeed, they have a long way to go. However, some of the recent measures taken by the Government, including a number of very encouraging steps in the fight against corruption, give us additional reasons to be hopeful. We thus call upon the Government to continue to build upon this momentum and effectively fulfil the legitimate expectations of the Afghan people.

At this point, I would also like to acknowledge the importance of the national political dialogue, which has recently gained renewed impetus in the country, and we express our hope for it to yield the desired results, namely, for a meaningful reconciliation under the ownership and leadership of the Afghan Government.

Thirdly, the Government and the people of Afghanistan need and deserve the full support of the international community in their endeavours to transform their country. In this regard, we are pleased to see the United Nations assuming a more active and central role in coordinating and steering the efforts of the international community. The Special Representative's focused and committed leadership to this end merits particular commendation. It is now imperative to translate this conceptual and organizational improvement into practical progress on the ground, while furnishing the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) with the necessary resources. In this context, it is of paramount importance that we increase the effectiveness of our humanitarian and development assistance in a way that will enable the ordinary people to feel the positive impact in their daily lives. We should also heed the call of the Secretary-General for a political surge and deliver it in the form of a policy surge that will win the hearts and minds of the Afghan people. That becomes particularly important at this time with the increasing numbers of civilian casualties, although the responsibility for this unfortunate phenomenon rests mainly with the terrorists and extremists. Furthermore, the approaching winter, which brings the risk of a new humanitarian crisis, also compels us to be vigilant and responsive.

So, as our immediate target, we should all exert every effort to make the next four to six months until next spring a period of fulfilled promises and tangible benefits for Afghanistan. Among other things, improved regional cooperation is imperative for achieving that goal. We are thus pleased to see

emerging a new environment of dialogue and cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan. For our part, we are committed to contribute in every possible way to this promising relationship, including through the trilateral cooperation process between our countries, which recently had its second summit meeting in Istanbul.

In conclusion, I will recap very briefly. We are moving in the right direction, but the road ahead is still full of challenges. Therefore, we need to be even more watchful and resolute. There is no doubt that the Afghans themselves should be in the driving seat. However, it is also imperative that the international community continue to act in a spirit of partnership and with a long-term vision and commitment. Turkey is ready and willing to do its fair share in this regard.

**The Acting President:** We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The General Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/63/L.17. I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution the following countries have become sponsors: Antigua and Barbuda, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kuwait, Madagascar, Mauritania, Palau, Paraguay, Qatar, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Togo and the United Arab Emirates.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/63/L.17?

*Draft resolution A/63/L.17 was adopted (resolution 63/18).*

**The Acting President:** May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 17?

*It was so decided.*

*The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.*